

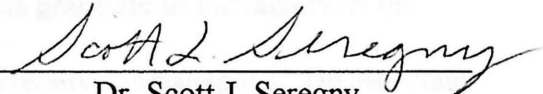
Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

IRREDENTISM REDUX:  
THE TERRITORIAL CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ITALIANS  
AND SOUTH SLAVS OVER VENEZIA-GIULIA, 1815-1954

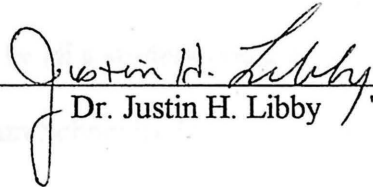
Gary E. Schultz  
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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
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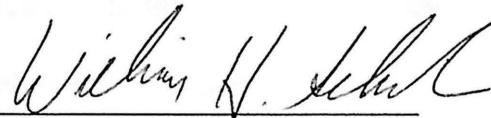
Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Sonia, who endured the Sturm und  
Drang of the some thirty months of my graduate study.

## PREFACE

Overlooking the small industrial city of Monfalcone, Italy, sits a fifteenth century fortification, called La Rocca. Encircling the edifice are several levels of bunkers and trenches, artifacts of the First World War. Local legend asserts that La Rocca sits upon the foundation of a fort established by Theodosius as he passed from Italy to the Eastern Empire in the fourth century. He used the traditional route through the Julian Alps, a passage not only permitting the eastward extension of Roman authority, but also facilitating the introduction of Celtic, Gothic and Byzantine cultures into the Italian peninsula by migration, invasion and by commerce. The Celts, Illyrians, Romans, Goths, Huns, Lombards, Avars and countless others used this gateway to Italy.

Approximately three miles from Monfalcone lies in the town of Redipuglia, I Cento Mila, a massive Italian national memorial to those who died in battle on the Carso during the First World War. This memorial contains 100,000 graves, while across the street from this site lies an Austrian cemetery. In both burial grounds Italian, German, and Slavic names are inscribed on the stone tablets, Crosses, and Stars of David. Even today in Monfalcone people carry names such as Padovan, Cusin, Streiker, and Biziac, reflecting the ethnic mix of Venetian, Friulian, German, and Slovene, respectively. Five miles to the north of Monfalcone the town of Doberdo' contains a Slovene ethnic majority, yet Doberdo' is not on Slovene soil,

for the Slovene border is fixed two miles away across the rail line which runs north-south from Trieste to Gorizia and northward to Klagenfurt in Austria.

To the southeast of Monfalcone, the great port-city of Trieste sits at the head of the Adriatic Sea, with its commercial metropolitan center and port in Italy and its suburbs in Slovenia. Since its founding in 200 BC, Trieste linked central Europe with the Mediterranean and was a focal point of territorial dispute among the ethnic groups representing the three great European cultures--Latin, German, and Slav. Today the land surrounding Trieste belongs to two nations, Italy and Slovenia. It is called Venezia-Giulia. The ethnic and national pressures for irredentism in this area influenced the course of modern European history. The friction caused by irredentist aspirations for Austro-Hungarian lands stirred Italy to enter the First World War on the side of the Allies, while during the Second World War these ambitions for the lands within the newly created Yugoslavia helped lead the Italians to join the Axis Powers. In the years following the Second World War, the dispute for lands persisted between Italy and Yugoslavia, and the conflict over the boundaries of Venezia-Giulia became a concern of the Great Powers.

In 1975 a team of Italian military engineers headed by a colonel met its Yugoslav counterpart and conducted a survey of the borders between their two nations. Even though the Cold War kept East and West apart, the two former enemies cordially cooperated to finalize the frontiers. The teams ran into practical difficulties in trying to fit a line drawn by politicians onto the actual terrain. For

example, in the city of Gorizia, they found that the frontier line ran directly through a cemetery, split several roads in two and even divided several dwellings. The teams simply took the easiest method available and divided the city east and west of the Isonzo (Soca) River. This survey resulted in the Treaty of Osimo which helped end over seventy years of conflict between several peoples and nations.

This thesis describes the long historical road which led to the Treaty of Osimo and of the many obstructions created by Italian and South Slav nationalism and irredentism over Venezia-Giulia. Numerous scholars have written about the open Italian-Yugoslav conflict which surfaced during and immediately following World War II, and most of their works have been consulted, and many of them have been referred to in this thesis. The most formidable work on Venezia-Giulia and Trieste, published in 1970, is that of Bogdan Novak of the University of Chicago. Novak concentrates on the geopolitical aspects of the conflict over Trieste and only briefly describes the background of ethnic tensions between Italians and South Slavs. While more recent studies dealing with the region further address specific political and social issues of the post-war period, there is a paucity of English language literature on the underlying tensions resulting from the rise of ethnic and national consciousness among the peoples of Venezia-Giulia: Slovenes, Croats, Friulians, and Venetian-Italians. Jill Benderly and Evan Kraft have produced a book on the recent history of Slovenia (since 1989), but the book's

background coverage on the rise of Slovene ethnic and national consciousness is limited to a short translation of an article by Slovene historian, Janko Prunk. Other works on Slovenia are mostly in the Slovene language or in Serbo-Croatian.

English language studies on Croatian and Friulian historical development are rare or non-existent; however, there are German and Italian sources available. On the other hand, there is a rich supply of material on the Venetian-Italians of Venezia-Giulia in the Italian language. Still, there is no single, definitive English language study of Venezia-Giulia and its peoples since the rise of nationalism in the early nineteenth century.

This thesis is a multifaceted study of Venezia-Giulia focusing on the ethnic, cultural, political and social attributes of its peoples and the historical events which led to the rise of ethnic and national consciousness within each ethnic group. The author has extracted materials relating to the subject from major secondary works on Austrian, Italian and South Slav history and has synthesized them into a single English language history of Venezia-Giulia, since 1815. He discusses the historical development of four peoples who reside in Venezia-Giulia within the context of external cultural and political influence. Further, the author uses the theoretical writings of several contemporary scholars to explain the nation building process of ethnic groups.

Each ethnic group in Venezia-Giulia followed a different development path. The Friulians never reached a national consciousness and remained a people first under the Austrians, then as members of the Italian nation-state. The Venetian-Italians of Venezia-Giulia did not follow the rapid nation-building process that the Italians on the rest of the peninsula experienced, but they aspired to join in union with Italy. Finally, after fifty years of turmoil, portions of Venezia-Giulia were fully absorbed within the Italian state in 1954. The Croats and Slovenes progressed through an intermediate stage of national development through incorporation into the South Slav or Yugoslav state after World War I. Both the Croats and Slovenes achieved nationhood in 1991.

The author has used the following orthographic conventions. Italian words have accent marks, German words with umlaut have conventional English spelling (without the ae, ue, oe), and Slavic accent marks have been ignored. For the most part the letter 'c' at the end of a word is pronounced 'ch', but it is pronounced as 'tz' at the beginning or in the middle of a word. The letter 's' at the beginning of a word is pronounced frequently as 'sh'. The letter 'z' in the middle of a word is pronounced 'je', as the French 'j'. Except as noted in bibliographic references, translations are by the author.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Ezio Belluno, "La Rocca di Monfalcone", Mario Roberti (Ed.) Studi Monfalconese e Duinati, (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1976), 114.

<sup>2</sup> The Carso (in Italian, Kras in Slovene or Karst in German) is named after the type of limestone which covers the hinterland of the foot hills which rise from the river plains of the west and the marshes of the south to the heights of the Julian Alps. The name is derived from an ancient Celt word kars meaning rock.

<sup>3</sup> The Slovene name is Julijske krajine (Julian March).

<sup>4</sup> Irredentism is defined as a policy directed toward the incorporation of historically or ethnically related territory into a political state. (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1983). Italia irredenta (unredeemed Italy) was the rallying call to irredentist claims.

<sup>5</sup> These recent studies include dissertations by Eric Terzuolo (Relations between the Italian and Yugoslav Communist Parties), Frank Verner (Italian occupation of Yugoslavia), Lucien Karchmar (Yugoslav Resistance), Roberto Rabel (Expansion of the Cold War aspects) and Glenda Sluga (Feminist aspects of the Trieste conflict).

<sup>6</sup> Janko Prunk, "Sovenski narodni vzpon" (Slovene national ascent), Narodna politika 1768-1992, (Ljubiana: Drzavna založba Slovenije, 1992), Jill Benderly and Evan Kraft (Eds.) Independent Slovenia: Origins, Movements, Prospects, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 1-23.

<sup>7</sup> There are many good surveys of Italy (Mack-Smith and Clark), the Balkans and East Europe (Jelavich, Singleton, Dedijer, Kann and Zednick), Austria-Hungary (Kohn) and the rise of nationalism (Hobsbawm, Niederhauser, and Anthony Smith). These works, however, do not focus in detail on Venezia-Giulia in all its complexities, nationalism, irredentism, politics, social and economic development and demographic shifts over a period of two centuries.



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## CHAPTER 1

BEFORE NATIONALISM:  
THE REGION AND ITS EARLY HISTORY

If one uses the City of Trieste (Trst) as a focal point (Map 1) and draws an arc from Venice, northward to the Carnian Alps (Karnische Alpe), then eastward through the city of Tarvisio, which sits on the present Austrian-Italian border, then around the Julian Alps (Julijske Alpe), reaching the Sava River plain west of Lubiana (Ljubljana), then southward to the Istrian peninsula to the cities of Fiume (Rijeka) and Pola (Pula), one can get a grasp of the regions of Venezia-Giulia (Julijska Krajina), Friuli, western Slovenia and Istria (Slovenska Primorska).<sup>1</sup> Flowing down from mountain sources are the Piave and Tagliamento Rivers which run through the fertile Friulian plains.<sup>2</sup> Another river, the Isonzo (Soca), flows southward into the Italian shores of the Adriatic; however, although the mouth of the river is in Italy, the source lies in the Republic of Slovenia. Running parallel to the Isonzo are hills of readily water-soluble limestone. Hence the surface rocks are honeycombed with hollows and caves (foibe). There is little surface soil, but where there is soil, the abundant rainfall of the area develops a cover of grass and pine forest.<sup>3</sup> This rocky area is called the Carso (Kras, Karst), and it sweeps eastward from the Julian foothills to the Sava river valley and south through Istria and the Dalmatian coast. In the mountainous north, lie zinc, copper and lead deposits.

The geographical position of the Carso has proved unfortunate for the peoples who have inhabited the land, for a multitude of raiding and invading peoples marched

along this main corridor from central Europe and from the Balkans across the Carso. Venezia-Giulia links the Italian plain of the Po Valley with the Danubian basin. The Peartree Pass (Hrusica), north of Zagreb, permits traffic from the Danube to move along the Sava to the west, and with connection of the Sava and Drava river valleys, the pass can also receive traffic from the east through the Orsova Gate.<sup>4</sup> At Trieste and Gorizia lie two narrow passages to Italy through the Julian Alps and the Carso. The Romans recognized the strategic value of this area, and they built defenses aside the road from Aquileia to the east in the second century.<sup>5</sup> Yet the defenses did not stop the invading forces from the north and from the east.

Although evidence of Neolithic culture indicates the presence of the earliest inhabitants of the territory, Bronze Age artifacts reveal at least three identifiable cultures--Pannonian, in the east, Enetian, in the west, and Illyrian in the south.<sup>6</sup> The remains of the Castellieri or stone forts show that these peoples needed stone fortifications for protection against marauders.<sup>7</sup> By 400 BC, Celtic tribes migrated into the area.<sup>8</sup> One of the tribes was called the Carni which settled in the northern mountains, now called the Carnian Alps, and over time, drifted southward along the Carso.<sup>9</sup> Along the Adriatic coast and in the Veneto plain, the Veneti tribe lived.<sup>10</sup>

The world of the early tribes inhabiting the area underwent transformation with the expansion of the Roman Empire. The Veneti were easily incorporated into the empire, but Celts, the Cisalpine Gauls, offered resistance. The Illyrians also resisted the Romans

and interfered with their aspirations in the Balkans, but superior Roman power suppressed both of these ancient tribes. As a result of the Roman conquests, all of present-day Venezia-Giulia, Friuli, Slovenia and Istria acquired Roman administration and Roman civilization under the provinces of Rhaetia, Noricum, Pannonia Superior, and Illyricum (Map 2).<sup>11</sup>

### **Venezia-Giulia and Friuli**

Roman culture was fully absorbed by the Veneti. By 300 BC, they had already settled into farming the river plains and entered commercial trade in the newly created towns and cities of Grado, Aquileia and Tergeste (Trieste). Of these, Aquileia became the major center for the spread of Roman influence to the north and east with its commercial and religious arteries. The city maintained contacts with the Celts in Rhaetia who absorbed Romanization to produce a unique linguistic and ethnic group, the Friulians. Their spoken language was quite distinct from other Italic dialects, being a mix of Latin, Greek (Byzantine), Celt and Gothic.<sup>12</sup>

In the sixth century, after enduring four centuries of invasions of Goths and Huns, Veneto and Rhaetia experienced the coming of the Lombards. When the Lombard chieftain, Alboin, arrived near Cividale, (Map 3) he did not meet an effective opposing Byzantine force, but he was still confronted with attacks by the Avars from the east. Using the ruins of the imperial cities and towns, he constructed defenses and formed an occupation administration, creating the duchy of Friuli. Thus the march (frontier) of

Friuli became separated from the rest of Veneto and nourished the development of a distinct culture and language.

As the Lombards moved out of the area into the Po River valley and to the province that is named for them (Lombardy), the Byzantines attempted to reestablish their influence and to counter the continued attacks by the Avars, but the power vacuum was later filled by the coming of a new set of overlords, the Franks. This new subjection of a people was reflected in the writings of the nineteenth century Italian nationalist, Alessandro Manzoni (author of I Promessi Sposi [The Betrothed]):

Old enemies lose to new lords,  
Yet the people are still collared  
By one or the other.<sup>13</sup>

The Duchy of Friuli entered the confines of the Holy Roman Empire under Otto I in the tenth century, and the Germans greatly influenced the cultural and political characteristics of the people. During the conflict between the Papacy and the Empire in the twelfth century, the Friulian nobility, who were German, strongly supported the Ghibellini (Imperial) position.<sup>14</sup> A new element arose with the growth of the Venetian Republic from 1100 onward. The Adriatic became the Venetian Sea. Venice developed the coast-lands and in an effort to secure the hinterlands, attempted to establish alliances with the nobility of the towns of Gorizia and Udine. With Gorizia, the Venetians were successful, but with Udine, the northern Friulians remained loyal to the Holy Roman Empire. As a result of the tensions between the two powers, a war broke out in the early

fifteenth century. Such was the history of the peoples of this area; they were trapped between the wills of greater powers.

For twenty-five years the Venetians occupied Friuli and portions of Slovene speaking lands along the Julian Alps and along the north-eastern Adriatic coast. In 1509, the Habsburgs defeated the Venetians at Agnadello, resulting in another split of Friuli, with Gorizia in the east under the Habsburgs and with Pordenone in the west under the Venetians.<sup>15</sup> (Map 3). The line dividing the two powers remained the same from that point of time until the nineteenth century. The Venetian-Imperial conflict also affected the organization of the Church. The Patriarchies of Aquileia and Grado lost their control of the east to a new diocese established in Lubiana (Laibach) and of the north in Friuli to the diocese of Salzburg.<sup>16</sup>

### Slovenia

The Gothic and Hun invasions of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries displaced the Celt inhabitants in Cisalpine Gaul. As the invaders moved on to other areas, the terrain of present day Slovenia was vacated, soon to be filled by a Slavic people. The Slavs were originally farming tribes speaking another Indo-European tongue who dwelled in the present-day Ukraine, but who migrated westward, under pressure of the Avars. There are accounts of periodic raids by the Slavs as confederates of the Avars in the Balkans in the sixth century. In the seventh century, as the Magyars entered the Hungarian plain and as the Germans (Franks and Bavarians) started their Drang nach Osten, the Southern Slavs became divided from their western cousins, the Czechs and Slovaks. The Slovenes were

the first southern Slav people to migrate into Venezia-Giulia in the early seventh century. (Map 4). Since their tribe was originally close to the Czech tribes, the Slovenes at that time spoke a language similar to that of the Czechs. The other southern Slavs--Serbs, Croats, Bulgars--settled in other areas of the Balkans and became separated from each other, both physically and culturally, partly because of geographical obstacles and partly because of foreign occupations.<sup>17</sup>

In the early years (623-658), the Bohemians (Czechs and Slovaks) and Slovenes united briefly under a chieftain, Samo, to defend themselves from the Avars and the Franks, who were trying to push their boundaries westward and eastward, respectively.<sup>18</sup> (Map 5). A century later, the Slovene people fought the Bavarian and Friulian dukes, yet they too submitted to the Franks in the year 748. The Frankish king christianized the Slovenes and incorporated them, along with the Friulian people into the Holy Roman Empire.

Under Emperor Otto I, the Franks governed both Friuli and Slovenia. To protect against the Magyar raids, Otto created three marches--Carinthia, Carniola and Kustenland. In the thirteenth century, the Bohemian king, Ottokar, formed an alliance to break away from the Holy Roman Empire a second time, but this rebellion was crushed at the battle at Marchfeld by Rudolf of Habsburg in 1278. (Map 6). The Habsburgs consolidated their acquisition of lands by annexing Carinthia, Carniola, Styria, Trieste and Istria in the fourteenth century. From then on, until the twentieth century the Slovenes were dependents of the Habsburgs.<sup>19</sup>

While the Habsburgs controlled the western Balkans, they were threatened in present day Serbia and Croatia by the Ottoman conquests of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Turks were rolled back by 1699 to a line that traversed the Sava and the Danube, a line which held for five hundred years. (Map 7). This line was the famous Military Frontier (Vojnisk Kraj). The military border marches were organized by the Habsburgs, commanded by Germans, manned chiefly by Serb soldiers and financed by the estates of the Slovene crown lands.<sup>20</sup> The military frontier in the southern areas of present-day Croatia were protected by Croat soldiers.

Although closely related ethnically to the Slovenes, the Serbs and Croats had different histories, but unlike the Slovenes, the Serbs and Croats had at one time or another controlled their own kingdom and had a unique history. The Serbs met the challenges of the Balkans and the Turks directly, while the Croats faced continued conflict with their northern neighbors, the Hungarians. The Hungarians gained the throne of Croatia in 1102; however, Istria (the peninsula opposite Venice), settled by Byzantine, Slovene and Croat peoples, remained under the control of the developing Venetian Republic.<sup>21</sup>

The levies and taxes collected to finance the defenses of the Military Frontier cost the Slovene peasants dearly. Under the feudal society serfs were able to retain land holdings for their own subsistence. Peasant land holdings, however, became smaller, and many peasants were no longer able to eke a livelihood from their reduced circumstances. As a result, a peasant revolt flared up in 1515 in all of Carinthia, but the lack of organized



leadership of the rebellion caused a quick suppression by the nobility. Another uprising occurred in 1635, and it also failed. The Croat peasants also suffered economic privations at the hands of their nobility, but they did not rebel.<sup>22</sup>

The Habsburgs in the seventeenth century further divided the territory inhabited by the Slovenes and Friulians into six administrative areas, all of which formed parts of Austria. These were Styria (Steiermark), Carniola (Krain), Carinthia (Karnten), Trieste, Gorizia (Gorica)-Gradisca and Istria. (Map 8). With Habsburg rule came Germanization. German barons acquired lands and German peasants farmed them, German artisans and merchants moved into Friulian and Slovene towns and the German Habsburgs who controlled the dioceses appointed German bishops.<sup>23</sup>

The Germanization encouraged talented young scholars to attend German schools.<sup>24</sup> One such man was Primož Trubar, who experienced the Reformation in the early sixteenth century and the impact of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into the vernacular German. Trubar made the first translation of the New Testament into Slovene, and he supported the development of a Slovene grammar. The works of Trubar and his collaborators circulated widely and influenced many educated Croats and Serbs who began to appreciate their own languages.<sup>25</sup> The Counter-Reformation actions of the Jesuits, however, quickly suppressed the use of written vernacular. It was not until the Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century that linguistic and ethnic consciousness arose again.

During the seventeenth century the towns in Slovenia were predominantly Slovene, except coastal Venetian towns. The nobility was largely German and to a lesser extent, Italian, but the Counter Reformation weakened German influence in the area, while Italian influence strengthened with the arrival of Italian merchants, artisans, doctors and lawyers. In 1631 the Bishop of Lubiana (Laibach) recorded that while the common people spoke Slovene, the public authorities used German, and the educated spoke mostly Italian.<sup>26</sup>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of uniformity, the Italian name will be used in this paper. The Slovene or German name will be indicated when the name is first introduced, for example, Fiume (Rijeka).

<sup>2</sup> The highest peak in the area is Veliki Triglav at 2864 meters (9,400 feet). (Paul Blanchard, Blue Guide to Yugoslavia [New York: W.W. Norton, 1984], 11).

<sup>3</sup> Griffith Taylor, "The Geographical Scene", Robert Kerner, (Ed.) Yugoslavia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Aquileia was the fourth largest city in Italy during the first five centuries of the Christian era. It was sacked by the Huns, but it remained influential until the ninth century. Its remains are on the northern Adriatic, between Venice and Trieste.

<sup>6</sup> The Pannonian culture remained survived until the arrival of the Lombards (560 AD). The Enetian culture in what is now northern Italy was absorbed by Veneti (an early Italic tribe which occupied the area around 1000 BC. (Loredana Capuis, I Veneti: societa e cultura di un popolo dell' Italia preromana, (Milano: Longanesi & C. 1993), 9) The Illyrian culture existed through the reign of one of its sons, Dioclecian.

<sup>7</sup> Vladimir Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, (New York: McGraw-Hill), 1974, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Clissold (Ed.) History of Yugoslavia: From Early Times to 1966, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 208.

<sup>9</sup> Livy spoke about the Carni as Gauls. The origins of the Carni are obscure, but there is evidence that they were Celts who migrated from Asia Minor about 1000 BC.

<sup>10</sup> See note 6, above.

<sup>11</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Giuseppe Francescato, Storia, lingua e societa' in Friuli, (Udine: Casamassima, 1977), 113. As Slovenes and Bavarians settled into the area, the language developed even further away from the Italic, yet its structure and grammar follow the Italian idiom. Friulian is a Rhaetic-Roman language, as is ladino, a language spoken in the Carnian Alps today. (Corey Kummer, "Italy's Coziest Corner", Atlantic, [April 1993], 116) The word Friuli is a corruption of Foro Iulia, the Roman provincial see, now named Cividale.

## NOTES

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 79. "Il forte se mesce col vinto nemico  
col nuovo signore remane l'antico:  
l'un popolo e l'altro sul collo vi sta"

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 135.

<sup>16</sup> In the early church the patriarch was a bishop next in rank to the Pope, with a metropolitan jurisdiction (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary). The Patriarchy of Aquilea controlled most of Venezia-Giulia and the southern half of Carniola (the northern half was controlled by the Bishop of Salzburg).

<sup>17</sup> Fred Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1 415.

<sup>18</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 13-15.

<sup>20</sup> Dedijs, History of Yugoslavia, 141-147.

<sup>21</sup> The Hungarian military frequently came to Croat lands when provoked by Venice's taking possession of coastal towns in Dalmatia and Istria. Under Hungarian rule, the old Byzantine Dalmatia collapsed entirely. Venice began to fill the vacuum in its effort to control its Mar Nostrum, the Adriatic. Italian merchants and artisans occupied the towns and cities of not only Dalmatia, Istria, but also its own port of Trieste. Slovenes and Croats occupied the hinterland, and to a small extent the coastal cities, but for the most part, the ports were under Venetian control. (Dedijs, History of Yugoslavia, 58.)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>23</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 51.

<sup>24</sup> During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the northern part of Slovenia and Friuli had assimilated German colonists.

<sup>25</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Robert A. Kann and David V Zdenek, The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 1526-1918. Seattle: (University of Washington Press, 1989), 123.

## CHAPTER 2

THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN AND SOUTH SLAV  
ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM

The Habsburg provinces of Carinthia, Carniola, Gorizia, Istria, Styria and Trieste benefited from the reforms introduced by Maria Theresa and Joseph II in the late eighteenth century. The influential French Physiocrats argued that only a prosperous, tax-paying peasantry could finance the growing requirements for the defense of the realm.<sup>1</sup> For that reason, the peasant needed to be free from the heavy feudal duties imposed on him by the local nobility, so that the peasant could spend more time on cultivation of his own crops and be able to pay taxes directly to the crown.

One reform was the institution of local provincial governments, which replaced the clientele of the nobility with a body of competent civil servants.<sup>2</sup> As such, the German nobility was shorn of its earlier representation in the Diet (Parliament) and its heavy control of the peasants. A second reform was the reduction of compulsory peasant labor to two days a week. Although serfdom was not abolished, direct taxation of the peasantry to support the estates was diminished while guaranteed land tenure for peasants on private estates was instituted. A third important reform was the introduction of the vernacular in the elementary schools and the use of vernacular in publications.<sup>3</sup> The latter reform dealing with education provided the basis for an increasingly literate population in Venezia-Giulia and provided an absolute precondition for the growth of ethnic and national identity.

The eighteenth century also furnished the philosophical basis for nationalism. The flowering of intellectual support for rationalism in government occurred in the Enlightenment. John Locke, and Thomas Hobbes inspired their readers to create a rational state. Montesquieu attempted to identify and analyze national characteristics, and David Hume assumed that each nation had a peculiar set of manners explained by climate or economic-political features.<sup>4</sup> Rousseau anticipated Georg Hegel in expressing that a nation was founded on a national spirit. Nations were conceived from both reason and from sentimentality. While the eighteenth century provided the philosophical basis for nationalism, the nineteenth century brought it to fruition.

The French Revolution and the conquests of Napoleon jolted the framework of European civilization. When the Venetian Republic collapsed in 1808 and Bonaparte conquered Italy one year later, Napoleon not only created the Kingdom of Italy, he also recreated a province called "Illyria". This new province took the ancient Roman provincial name and incorporated the old Habsburg provinces of Carniola, Carinthia, Croatia and Istria and the Venetian province of Dalmatia into a single French province. The French administration permitted the local educated elite to participate in government and encouraged the use of the local languages (Italian, Slovene and Croatian) in the secondary schools and in public affairs.<sup>5</sup> The experience, though short in duration (1809-1813), energized Italian and South Slav intellectuals to uncover their ethnic uniqueness and national spirit by studying language, history and folklore.<sup>6</sup> The Romantic movement in the early nineteenth century brought Europe a golden age of lexicographers,

grammarians, philologists of the vernacular as well as writers, poets, dramatists, and folk musicians who explored their newly found ethnicity.

There are many ways of defining ethnicity. The more traditional method is to describe ethnicity by some distinguishing cultural feature that clearly separates one group from another—be it language, religion, race or a combination of these features. The anthropologist, George D. De Vos, defines ethnicity as a sense of ethnic identity which consists of “subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people---of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups.”<sup>7</sup> De Vos adds folk tradition and practices, historical continuity and common ancestry or place of origin as attributes which bring about a sense of community. Another contemporary scholar, Anthony D. Smith states that an ethnic community is a means by which a people express collective experiences. These experiences include a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture and an association with a specific territory. These attributes become formalized in symbolic rites and myths and ultimately pass into legal codes and institutions. The symbolism of shared history or experiences is a strong bond.<sup>8</sup> De Vos comments that “ethnicity is like religion, people seem to need it.”<sup>9</sup>

More often than not, the ethnic demands of the nineteenth century centered initially around a single central symbol.<sup>10</sup> Of those objective features most commonly used in defining ethnicity, language is most often cited as a major distinguishing attribute, but it is often only a symbol of identity of belonging to a group with its traditions and myths. Benedict Anderson, an anthropologist, argues that language and symbols are the tools to reinforce ethnic identity.<sup>11</sup> He describes language as a symbol of a sense of community.

Anderson calls the nation an “imagined community”. It is imagined because the word community refers to daily, personal contact of members of the group, hardly possible even in the smallest state, yet each member shares a deep horizontal comradeship, expressed through language. Ernest Gellner, a contemporary political scientist, goes further and rules that this sense of community, ethnic consciousness, invents nations where they do not exist.

The Czech historian Miroslav Hroch defines three phases in the development of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe. The initial phase was characterized by the presence of an active intelligentsia involved in the discovery of ethnic history, culture and language. The second phase was the awakening of national consciousness among the educated bourgeoisie and civil servants, and the final phase was the mobilization of the masses.<sup>12</sup>

The intelligentsia, especially the academics, lawyers and journalists, who were proficient in persuasion with the use of the vernacular helped to promote ethnic identity—the first phase.<sup>13</sup> These men could be called “Awakeners”<sup>14</sup> The impact of the printing press, the opening of universities and the transformation of the vernacular into a literary language influenced the stratum between the upper middle class and the masses—school teachers, parish priests and local officials who extended the sense of nationalism and ethnic pride in the towns and villages—the second phase.<sup>15</sup> With growing urbanization, literacy and a popular press, mobilization of the masses could occur—the third phase.



### South Slav Ethnic Consciousness

In Slovenia, the first national poet, France Preseren, wrote lyrical poetry in both the German and the Slovene language. Preseren was an “Awakener”. His poetry sang of the land and people in a lyrical manner. Although his primary audience was the educated bilingual intelligentsia of his native Slovenia, peasants recited passages of his poetry.<sup>16</sup> Preseren and his colleague, Matija Cop, used the Slovene language in their writings, rather than using the related Croat language, that the Croat linguist Ljudevit Gaj proposed.<sup>17</sup> The Slovene language was called kajkavian with its own syntax, orthographic accent markings and vocabulary. Slovene was preserved as a distinct national tongue different from the Serbo-Croatian stokavian language by the efforts of the major Slovene linguist and philologist, Bartholmaeus Kopitar, who developed the Slovene grammar in the late eighteenth century. The language became a literary and popular written language with the poetry of Preseren with its use in the press. By 1800, a Slovene manufacturer, Baron Z. Zois, published a Slovene language newspaper, Lublanske Novize (News of Lubiana).<sup>18</sup> Benedict Anderson points out that once a language reaches a stage where it is profitable to print newspapers, “Print capitalism permits rapid mobilization of ethnic consciousness.”<sup>19</sup>

Another Awakener of South Slavic ethnic awareness was not a poet, but a man of both letters and of the Church. Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer of Djakovo was a Croat who saw the past history of the South Slavs (Catholic Croats and Slovenes and Orthodox Serbs) as the key to a unified nation.<sup>20</sup> As an influential cleric and writer, he encouraged the use of the vernacular in secondary schools and in the press.<sup>21</sup> By so doing,

Strossmayer was able to re-ignite the fervor of nationalism stirred during the brief existence of Napoleon's province of Illyria.<sup>22</sup> He was realistic enough to recognize that the South Slavs could not stand alone as a separate nation. His vision was of a South Slav nation within the Habsburg Empire.

Although Strossmayer stimulated South Slav ethnic and national consciousness, his new movement gained few Slovene followers as they saw their idiom and history were distinct. Slovene ethnic consciousness made slow but steady progress in the first half of the nineteenth century. The education reforms instituted at the beginning of the century began to take effect. In 1809 one in seven Slovene children received an elementary education in his native tongue. By 1847, one in three received grammar school education taught in Slovene. In the same period the number of secondary schools increased from three to ten. While literacy in the vernacular increased ethnic consciousness, the Slovene national movement suffered one major weakness--the difficulty in enlisting the rising middle class to use the vernacular in commerce and in government, for the bourgeoisie preferred German or Italian for public use.<sup>23</sup>

The Revolutions of 1848-1849 helped change this attitude. The news of the March Revolution in 1848 in Vienna led the Slovene peasants to express their social discontent rather than demanding national or political change. They were primarily interested in ending the vestiges of the feudal system.<sup>24</sup> Members of the Slovene intelligentsia and middle class saw the need for reform. In Vienna, they organized the Slovenija Society for the purpose of creating a United Slovenia into a semi-autonomous nation with its own

Diet as part of the Habsburg Empire, but this national movement failed because of inadequate leadership. The Slovenija Society was successful, however, during the revolution, in supporting state elementary schooling reform, which further strengthened earlier efforts for universal education and the continued use of the mother tongue as a teaching language.

The Revolutions of 1848 -1849 failed to overturn the old order, yet the revolutions achieved one major reform, the abolition of serfdom. The emancipation helped bridge the gap between the peasant and the emerging middle class. Other reforms were initiated, including the official use of the Slovene language in 1851, but the conservative backlash prevented implementation of them and the Austrian regime returned to political centralism with an entire system resting on German civil servants.<sup>25</sup> The chancellor, Alexander Bach, subjected both the Friulians and Slovenes to a ruthless policy of Germanization.<sup>26</sup> The reforms in the use of language legislated by the Reichsrat in 1848 were ignored, the official gazette was no longer published in the vernacular, and most Slovene periodicals, launched in 1848, disappeared. Gains in elementary education persisted, but the secondary schools again became thoroughly German.<sup>27</sup> By 1867, however, with parliamentary reforms, the Slovenes won a majority in the provincial diet and made progress in the use of their language in representative state bodies, offices, courts and secondary schools. The Elementary School Act of 1869 practically established universal education and radically increased literacy.<sup>28</sup> By 1900 over ninety per cent of the population was literate, making Slovenia the most advanced South Slav "nation".<sup>29</sup>

Textbooks, catechisms, and newspapers in the national language appeared early in the century and grew in significant numbers in the later part of the nineteenth century, thus facilitating the mobilization of the masses. Eric Hobsbawm states that nationalism essentially required control or at least the official recognition for the national language. Hence, the moment when textbooks or newspapers in the national language were first written or that language was used for some official purpose, a crucial step was taken in the evolution toward a nation-state.<sup>30</sup> National consciousness tended to become more of a political issue as cadres dedicated to the national idea emerged who published journals and other literature, organized national societies and established educational and cultural institutions (e.g. Sokols, gymnastic clubs).<sup>31</sup> Near the end of the century, literacy increased significantly, and the masses became more aware of their ethnicity through the popular press. By then, Slovene became the obligatory language in judicial proceedings, if a party knew no other language.<sup>32</sup>

The public did not become nationalist solely from sentiment, but also from potential social-economic advantages.<sup>33</sup> Autonomy and self-sufficiency meant jobs, more material items, including some luxuries, and social mobility. The peasants and lower clergy of Eastern Europe accepted nationalism when they became conscious of foreign social and economic domination.<sup>34</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Slovenes underwent a gradual transition from a rural to an industrial society. Although most Slovenes still lived in rural areas and worked the land, after the abolition of serfdom they were legally free to leave the countryside. With freedom and population growth came economic insecurity. Local

parish priests and groups of peasants began to form rural cooperatives. Other peasants began to migrate to urban centers in search of jobs. In major towns and cities, most Slovenes became factory workers or miners, while a few became entrepreneurs, bankers and government employees. The effects of industrialization reflected greater urbanization. While the overall population of Slovenia grew by twenty percent from 1857 to 1910, the number of people living in rural areas declined by thirty percent. A number of important industrial centers developed, including multinational Trieste, Gorizia and Villach. In the city of Trieste, due to the needs of industrial manpower, the number of Slovenes increased steadily. In 1910, twenty-five percent of the population was Slovene. (Table I, below).

In contrast, the Italians of the Veneto Region moved into the cities of Dalmatia and Istria. In these areas, the whole of the middle class was Italian. The ports of Pola, Fiume and Zara (Zadar) were Italian islands in a Slav sea. (Map 9). In 1846 there were 60,000 Italians among 228,000 Slavs, but by 1910, there were 140,000 Italians among 317,000 Slavs in Istria. The following table provides the official census figures of key industrial cities of Venezia-Giulia.<sup>35</sup>

Table I

		<u>German</u>	<u>Italian</u>	<u>Slovene</u>	<u>Croat</u>	<u>Other</u>
Trieste	1880	5,000	89,000	26,000	2,500	
	1910	12,000	119,000	59,000	3,000	30,000
Gorizia	1880	2,100	13,000	3,400		
	1910	3,200	14,800	10,800		

Census figures must be used with caution. Since the census tables used by the Habsburgs listed different ethnic groups only for Austrian subjects, many citizens of Italy (15,000) living in Venezia-Giulia were tabulated simply as “Others”.<sup>36</sup> In addition, numerous ethnic Slovenes and Croats were classified as Italian, since some Slavs who migrated to the Italian-dominated cities rejected their mother tongue as a language of peasants, and began to speak Italian. To be an Italian--a city-dweller--brought social prestige and economic advantages. Those who had married Italians or wished for greater opportunities simply proclaimed themselves Italians. In the same manner, Slovenes living in cities dominated by Germans, such as Graz or Klagenfurt, chose to assimilate in order to move up the social ladder. As literate Slovenes migrated to the cities and entered commerce and industry, they found the cities dominated by “foreign” ethnic groups (Germans and Italians). The economic and social elite demanded the imposition of one language of instruction, a different culture and a “foreign” nationality. The Slovenes were forced to choose assimilation or inferior status of an immigrant. Many Slovene industrial workers sought a solution through unionization and socialism.

Raymond Pearson, an East European historian, argues that urbanization, the leading demographic by-product of industrialization, also favored the development of nationalism. As towns and cities began to spring up, e.g. Zagreb, Lubiana and Trieste, the fortunes of individual nationalities became largely contingent upon possession of an urban base. Towns supplied a meeting place for the educated cadres (intelligentsia and middle class) who could mobilize the urban proletariat. Only a city could constitute that mass

concentration of forces for the bastion of national opportunity.<sup>37</sup> The urban populations of Trieste and Gorizia had grown to provide such a base.

### **Italian Nationalism**

The peoples of Friuli experienced many of the official pressures that the Slovenes endured under the Habsburgs. Yet, Friuli did not produce Awakeners for national consciousness. Though Friulian intellectuals were infatuated with local customs, historical traditions and the spoken and written vernacular, they did not pursue it as an official language. The vernacular taught in the schools was not Friulian, but Italian or German. The Habsburgs considered Friulian and the related Ladino (Rhaetic-Roman) as regional dialects. In the northern areas of Friuli both German and Friulian were spoken, and in the southern areas both Italian and Friulian were used as the idioms, but the languages taught in schools were German and Italian. Consequently, those living in the northern region identified with German culture, while those living in the southern region identified with Italian culture. In contrast with the Slovenes, who eventually won the official use of the vernacular, the Friulians did not have a popular daily press in their own language nor did they demand official use of their language. Consequently the Friulians did not develop a national feeling.

In the Italian peninsula the experience of Bonapartism sparked the imagination of educated Italians. Italy, where clerical and foreign domination had demoralized the national spirit for more than a thousand years, remained a patchwork of feudal duchies and states. Still, the distant calls for Italian nationalism from Dante to Machievelli lay buried in the national literature. Under Napoleon, Austria was banished from Lombardy

and Venetia, Spain from Naples and a "Kingdom of Italy" was proclaimed. Although the Restoration after 1815 brought back the Habsburgs and Bourbons, it could not cancel the effects of the French Revolution. Napoleon's armies were rolled back, but his granting of local autonomy from the tyranny of foreigners was remembered. Despite the repression following the Restoration, the ground was fertile for secret orders, like the Carbonari, to form and spread the ideas of independence from foreign domination.<sup>38</sup>

Another nationalist writer, by the name of Guiseppe Mazzini, became an Italian Awakener, not only by the use of words, but also by action.<sup>39</sup> He envisioned Italy as one, indivisible and free nation, with Rome as her capital.

"Come with me, and I will show you where beats the heart of Italy.  
Bow the knee and worship. Yonder beats the heart of Italy, yonder  
eternally majestic, is Rome."

The First Rome of the Caesars, according to Mazzini, carried to the world the idea of right, of justice, the source of liberty. The Second Rome, governed by the great Popes, made the secular law sacred and superimposed the idea of duty. The Third Rome, the Rome of the Italian People, had a mission to "instruct the free and equal peoples of the nations in the Association of Unity and Duty".<sup>40</sup> Thus, Mazzini perpetuated a modern myth of a Third Rome with a clearly defined Italy as the savior of the world. Italy was embraced by the mountains and by mare nostro. He saw nations divided from one another by natural frontiers, traced by God in the rivers, mountains and seas. Historically Italy had always been a civilizing influence among nations, and Rome had been the center of civilization.<sup>41</sup>

Building upon the Roman-Italian mythology, Mazzini formed the republican



society of Young Italy, which assumed the moral leadership of the Italian movement.

Aspirations for a liberal state ran high in the 1840's, for the young King Charles Albert of Savoy, King of Sardinia, invoked the names of Napoleon and Washington in his appeals for unity.<sup>42</sup> Yet those hopes were soon dashed as Charles Albert lashed out against Young Italy as atheists and as conspirators. Mazzini was forced into exile, first in Switzerland, then in England. His idea of Young Italy encouraged others, and nationalist ideas and actions burst the bounds of Klemens von Metternich's Europe with the Revolutions of 1848-1849.

One of the greatest challenges to the integrity of the Austrian Monarchy in 1848 came from northern Italy. Revolutions broke out in Milan and Venice, and Marshal Joseph Radetzky's forces were driven out of both cities. By summer of 1848, both Lombardy and Venetia had voted to become part of an Italian kingdom under the House of Savoy, but the Austrian marshal, Count Radetzky succeeded in retaking Milan, and in the following year, he defeated Charles Albert at Novara in the Piedmont. Venice capitulated, and the leaders of an abortive Mazzinian uprising went into exile.<sup>43</sup> While these revolutions generally failed to win their objectives, they destroyed the old regime that Metternich, the venerable Austrian Prime Minister, strove to maintain.<sup>44</sup> The decisive confrontation was not between old regimes and the united forces of progress, but between order and social revolution. Thus the Revolutions of 1848-1849 surged and broke like a great wave, leaving little behind except myth and promise.<sup>45</sup>

All was not lost after 1848. Mazzini's words were read and the spirit of the risorgimento was about to stir. The traditions and myths that Mazzini capitalized upon

provided a mold for nation-building, for they offered a sense of belonging. The nation-state would establish autonomy and unity, and myth would reinforce the bonds of unity. To some political philosophers, like Ernest Renan and Heinrich von Treitschke, the nation was a Hegelian organism with a soul.<sup>46</sup> The myths were based on metaphysical, physical, and cultural aspects. The metaphysical aspect made the nation a part of God's divine plan--Providence.<sup>47</sup> Treitschke, influenced by Montesquieu's emphasis on the physical environment's impact on race and culture, led him to apply Social Darwinism on national scale. In the struggle for existence in human societies, strong nations survived.<sup>48</sup> By 1866 Italy was united, and within a decade Rome was added to the nation-state.<sup>49</sup> Flushed with success, Italian nationalists looked to Italian speaking territories that remained outside the new nation-state: Trieste, Istria, and Trentino as terra irredenta.<sup>50</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Physiocrats were members of a school of political economists who advocated that government policy should not interfere with the operation of natural economic laws and that land was the source of all wealth.

<sup>2</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 231.

<sup>3</sup> Robert A. Kann, A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 395. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries elementary education was not universal, but the Church did provide education for the nobility and the middle-class. Universal elementary education gained momentum in the mid-nineteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> Josep R. Llobera, The God of Modernity: The Development of Nationalism in Western Europe, (Oxford: Berg, 1994), 202.

<sup>5</sup> Emil Niederhauser, The Rise of Nationality in Eastern Europe, translated by Karoly Ravasz, (Budapest: Corvina, 1982), 79.

<sup>6</sup> Benderly and Kraft, Independent Slovenia, 7.

<sup>7</sup> George A. De Vos, "Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation", Lola Romanucci-Ross and George A. De Vos (Eds.), Ethnic Identity: Creation, Conflict and Accommodation, (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamire Press, 1995), 18.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 38.

<sup>9</sup> De Vos, "Ethnic Pluralism", 4.

<sup>10</sup> Paul R. Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), 31. Note that Vaclav Havel, both a man of politics and of literature, was the principal leader in recreation of the Czech Republic.

<sup>11</sup> Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Llobera, The God of Modernity, 156-157.

<sup>13</sup> Miloslav Horsch, Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Awakener is a term used by Ernest Renan. It refers to those intellectuals who helped to awake ethnic consciousness.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, Imagined Communities, 46.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Ronald Cooper, Jr., France Preseren, (Boston: Twayne, 1992), 33-34.

## NOTES

<sup>17</sup> Charles Jelavich, South Slav Nationalisms--Textbooks and Yugoslav Union Before 1914, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 128.

<sup>18</sup> Robert A. Kann and David Zdenek, The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands 1526-1918, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 213.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, Imagined Communities, 47. Print languages create a single unified language of many dialects, fixes it, and empowers its use officially.

<sup>20</sup> Strossmayer was active in opposing the doctrine of Papal Infallibility at Vatican I. His hopes for reunification of the Orthodox and Roman churches were never realized. In politics, he advocated federalism as opposed to the centralization of both monarch and church. (Charles J. Slovak, III, "Josip Juraj Strossmayer, A Balkan Bishop: The Early Years 1815-1855", Diss. University of Illinois, 1974, 3.)

<sup>21</sup> Strossmayer favored the use of one dialect, the Croatian.

<sup>22</sup> Io Sivric, Bishop J. G. Strossmayer: New Light on Vatican I, (Rome: Ziral, 1975), 30. After the Ausgleich, in 1867, and as stern Hungarian Measures took hold, Strossmayer reconsidered his suspicions of Russia's Balkan aspirations and tended to advocate the aid of the Russians, French and British in the Freeing of the South Slavs from Ottoman and Austrian centralized rule.

<sup>23</sup> Raymond Pearson, National Minorities in Eastern Europe, (London: Macmillan, 1992), 36.

<sup>24</sup> There was only one major irreversible change gained by the peasants as the result of the revolution: the abolition of serfdom in the Habsburg Empire. Still, the peasant holding rarely exceeded ten hectares. The peoples of Friuli were relatively passive during the Revolution, as the middle classes and peasants had strong bonds of loyalty to the Empire and the Church. (Kann and Zdenek, The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 329).

<sup>25</sup> Dedjier, History of Yugoslavia, 313.

<sup>26</sup> The Germanization program was as much Franz Joseph's as Bach's. "My Minister of Foreign Affairs is conducting My polity", F.R. Bridge, The Habsburg Monarchy among the Great Powers, 1815-1918, (New York: Berg, 1990), 4).

<sup>27</sup> Kann and Zdenek, The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 329.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>29</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 15.

<sup>30</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848, (New York: Times Mirror, 1961), 166-167.

<sup>31</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 106-112.

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<sup>32</sup> Kann and Zdenek, The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 331-332.

<sup>33</sup> Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism and Modernization", John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (Eds.), Nationalism, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 56.

<sup>34</sup> Llobera, The God of Modernity, 202.

<sup>35</sup> Karl Hugelmann Gottfried, Das Nationalitätenrecht des alten Österreich, (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1934), 578. Other includes "foreigners" which Austrian authorities lumped together. These included 5,000 Greeks, 4,000 Jews, and about 15,000 Friulians and Italians from other provinces. (Bogdan Novak, Trieste, 1911-1954: The Ethnic, Political and Ideological Struggle, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970], footnote 8.)

<sup>36</sup> In 1910 the province of Gorizia-Gradisca had 4500 Germans, 90,000 Friulian-Italians and 154,000 Slovenes. Capodistria, a suburb of Trieste. The Istrian peninsula had 300 Germans, 38,000 Italians, 17,000 Croats, and 32,000 Slovenes. (*Ibid.* 8.) The 1910 census data was based on Umgangssprache (language of daily use). Jews were not considered as a separate group, for they had no language of their own. Ladins (those Rhaetic elements speaking ladino) and Friulians were counted as Italians. Ladino of Friuli is not to be confused with Sephardic ladino. (Sergij Vilfan, "An Ethnic Mosaic--Austria before 1918", Sergij Vilfan, [Ed.] Ethnic Groups and Language Rights: Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940, [New York: New York University Press, 1993], 115.)

<sup>37</sup> Pearson, National Minorities in Eastern Europe, 353-356.

<sup>38</sup> Gwilym O. Griffith, Mazzini: Prophet of Modern Europe, (New York: Fertig, 1970), 34.

<sup>39</sup> Mazzini was strongly influenced by Foscolo's literary hero Jacopo Ortis, but the German thinkers of the Enlightenment--Kant, Fichte, Herder and Hegel--further stimulated him. He saw history from the beginning onward as a development decreed by God. (*Ibid.* 41).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 65. It is little wonder that the official philosopher of Fascism, Giovanni Gentile, hailed Mazzini as an advocate of duty.

<sup>41</sup> Gaetano Salvemini, Mazzini, I.M. Rawson, (Trans), (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 70.

<sup>42</sup> Charles Albert's realm included the Piedmont (the province which includes Torino (Turin). The leaders of the Risorgimento, the unification of modern Italy, included King Vittorio Emmanuel, Cavour and Mazzini, all from the Piedmont.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>44</sup> Shafer, Nationalism, 162.

<sup>45</sup> Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780, 89.

<sup>46</sup> Boyd Shafer, Nationalism: Myth and Reality, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955), 6.

<sup>47</sup> Carlton Hayes in his book, (Nationalism: A Religion, [New York: Macmillan, 1960]), satirizes the whole religious concept of nationalism. Nationalism, itself, has become a religion, with universal liturgical forms, processions, sacred shrines, and a potpourri of myths and legends.

<sup>48</sup> Catherine Colle, of the University of Bordeaux, in her article, "L'utilisation des dimensions dans l'outillage ideologique du nationalisme et ses rapports avec le myth", History of European Ideas, Vol. 16, No. 4 (1993), 407-414, contends that not only the most powerful states always succeed; that some states are like David and Goliath, in which weaker states are able to overcome the more powerful through crafty skills. For example, Cavour of Italy was able to out-manuever both France and Austria.

<sup>49</sup> Venetia (the old Venetian provinces) did not include Venezia-Giulia which remained under the Habsburgs until the end of the First World War.

<sup>50</sup> Kohn, Nationalism, 58.

## CHAPTER 3

## IRREDENTISM AND WORLD WAR I

The emergence of nationalism in the nineteenth century affected both the Italian and Southern Slav peoples. Italy became a unified state, but it still desired to regain historical lands. The Friulians developed an ethnic consciousness, while the Slovenes and Croats transformed their ethnic consciousness to a sense of nationalism, but all three remained under the dominion of the Habsburgs. In the late nineteenth century, as the power and prestige of the Habsburg dynasty diminished, the empire sought to retain its lands and authority as well as expand its influence, especially in the Balkans.

Austria was gripped by crisis, having lost the war with France in 1859 and with Prussia in 1866. The old state apparatus tottered, exhausted by domestic strife and warfare with its neighbors. With interests in Italy and in the Balkans, Austria was too weak to fully manage her interests without help. Therefore, the empire had to become dependent on the support of at least one of the other great powers, and this meant that the empire was dependent on shifts in the international situation, which were beyond its control.<sup>1</sup> As the century came to an end, Austria associated with Germany and Italy in the Triple Alliance as she sought to retain control of the territories of Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia. This control would protect the vital line of communication from encroachment by Serbs and their Russian allies and would help Austria dominate the rest of the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>2</sup>

The key nation in the Balkans for Austria-Hungary was Serbia which had achieved a semi-autonomous status in the Ottoman empire early in the nineteenth century. By 1878 Serbia was independent but, under Austrian influence, tantamount to being a protectorate. Public opinion forced the abdication of the pro-Austrian King Milan Obrenovic in 1889 in favor of the pro-Russian King Alexander Karadjordjevic, who had designs on Bulgarian territory.<sup>3</sup> Consequently the balance of power changed in the Balkans. At the same time, other Serbs formed clandestine organizations which sought Serb irredentist claims in Bosnia, Dalmatia, the Military Frontier (Croatia and Slavonia), Montenegro and Macedonia.

By the early twentieth century, the Balkans had become an important market for export which neither the Alliance nor its competitor, the Entente, could afford to neglect. Austria was ever alert to Russian, Serb and even German intrusions into the Balkans and threat to its strategic interests. In the era of Weltpolitik, Germany developed imperialist ambitions of her own in the Ottoman Empire and in the Balkans, often at the expense of her Austro-Hungarian ally, yet there was little the Austrians could do to halt their increasing dependence on Germany. Russia continued to exert its influence in the Balkans in the name of Pan-Slavism, with the tacit support of her British and French allies, who had become increasingly obsessed with the growing German threat.

The agreements on which these two alignments (Triple Alliance and the Entente) rested were defensive in nature, that is, the signatories pledged to come to the aid of others in event of attack by another power.<sup>4</sup> Between 1878 and 1908, the balance of power



in the Balkans had been successfully preserved; however, the international accord was broken when Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, which caused strong resentment in both Russia and Serbia. The Serbs, under King Peter Karadjordjevic, still hoped to acquire what they regarded as national lands in Bosnia. The Serbs turned to the Russians for help, and this caused a split between Austria and Russia. As the Ottoman Empire began to fail, others took advantage of its weakness. Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and King Vittorio Emmanuel II of Italy came to an agreement to enable Italy in 1911 to go to war with the Ottoman Empire over Tripoli, and during this same period the Serbs and Bulgarians made a series of pacts to attack the Turks in Macedonia and in Thrace.<sup>5</sup>

### **Italian Irredentism**

As Austria experienced problems in the Balkans, it also faced growing tensions in its Italian provinces. In Friuli the Friulian people inhabited both urban and rural areas. In Venezia-Giulia, Veneto-Italians lived in cities and towns, while Slovenes and Croats dwelled in the countryside. (Map 10). There was little problem drawing an ethnic line running north to south, from the Austrian border to the Adriatic Sea. West of the line were Friulians and Italians; east of the line were the Slavs.<sup>6</sup> There were never great disputes between the Slovenes and the Friulians; on the contrary, they shared a friendly relationship. Those Friulians coming under the jurisdiction of the Italians after 1866 were for the most part considered Italians, and the Friulian cultural features were not regarded as distinctive. Friuli was for the most part a linguistic island.<sup>7</sup> To those Venetian-Italians, however, who lived in

the urban pockets of Italianita' (Trieste, Fiume, Gorizia and Pola) in the Dual Monarchy and who desired to join the Italian nation, the increasing numbers of Slavs who migrated to their cities caused grave concern. The Italians had long dominated the area in terms of commerce, industry and land ownership, but over time Slav merchants and artisans began to effectively compete. This social and economic challenge was particularly evident in Gorizia, Dalmatia and in Pola. In these areas some Italians were edged out of jobs by newly arrived Slavs. This competition for jobs and commercial enterprise led many Italians in Venezia-Giulia to look to the new Italian nation. They joined irredentist organizations calling for unification of historic Italian lands, i.e. former Roman and Venetian colonies in Venezia-Giulia, Istria and Dalmatia.

During the late nineteenth century, Italy wanted its place in the sun. Rome had been won, the risorgimento had succeeded, but other Europeans did not take Italy seriously. The Italian language (actually the dialects of Venice and of Genoa), once a lingua franca throughout the Mediterranean, was being displaced by French and English.<sup>8</sup> Geopolitically speaking, the peninsula was best placed to dominate the Mediterranean.<sup>9</sup> Italy was preeminently a Mediterranean power in the widest sense of that term. British Prime Minister Arthur Lord Balfour at the Washington Naval Conference said, "Italy is not an island, but for the purpose of this debate she counts as one."<sup>10</sup> The beginning of work on the Suez canal gave strong impetus to imperialism, and Cavour, the statesman of unified Italy intended that the Italian merchant marine should be in the van of opening up of this passage to the East.<sup>11</sup>

Italy attempted two approaches to expand its influence: the irredentist one which was

oriented towards the continent and presented potential conflict with Austrian interests, and the alternative colonialist one which was oriented towards the Mediterranean and clashed with French aspirations. When northern Italians (Piedmontese, Lombards) controlled the government, state policy followed the anti-Austrian approach favoring participation in European power-politics. When southern Italians (Romans, Calabrians) held office, state policy emphasized the anti-French direction, particularly in the Mediterranean, e.g. the invasion of Libya. The Mediterranean orientation in the acquisition of African colonies had the advantage of being fashionable, forceful and activist; moreover, it avoided direct conflict with another great power.<sup>12</sup> This approach appealed to both the industrial and mercantile interests and to the landowners in southern Italy, who nervously observed increasing discontent of a land hungry peasantry.

Italy's rival in the Mediterranean, France, began to revive after its defeat by Germany. The Italians resented French pretensions to be the tutor of Italy, and the French occupation of Tunis in 1881 was a bitter blow to Italian prestige. Therefore, Italy sought friends elsewhere. In May 1882, she signed the Triple Alliance. Italy promised to help Germany in the event of a French attack, or if Germany or Austria-Hungary were attacked by the French or Russians. In return, the Germans and Austrians promised to defend Italy against any French attack.<sup>13</sup> Within a few years, however, the alliance showed signs of strain. Italy's interests in the Balkans clearly conflicted with those of Austria.

Irredentism espoused by Italian republicans and nationalists further strained these relations. Some adherents became radicalized, and in December 1882 ,

Guglielmo Oberdan, a Trieste student, was accused of plotting the assassination of Emperor Franz Joseph.<sup>14</sup> In the lands claimed by the irredentists—the cities and environs of Trieste, Gorizia, Fiume, Trentino and Istria—Italian was the principal tongue. The Trentino was a large Austrian wedge driven southward through the Dolomite mountain chain. After separation from Venice in 1866, the Italian inhabitants were isolated, and Austria progressively Germanized the province. The Italians of Trentino, as those of Friuli, were largely oriented toward Catholic conservatism, and they opposed the radical, liberal forces at work in Italian irredentism. On the other hand, the Italian speaking people of Trieste and many Italianized Slavs took up the irredentist movement. Italian nationalists in Trieste looked longingly at the new united Italy.<sup>15</sup> Even the newly formed socialist unions favored Italian nationalism because Italian workers feared greater South Slav immigration and economic competition.<sup>16</sup> By 1910, the majority of industrial workers in Trieste were of Slovene descent.<sup>17</sup> (See Table 1, above.)

Ethnic tensions between Slavs and Italians increased over time due to three things: first, the conflict of Italian and Croat interests in Dalmatia and Fiume; second, the Italian irredentist claims for the hinterland along the Isonzo and for Istria, which were largely populated by Slavs (Slovenes and Croats, respectively); and third, a general Italian racial contempt for “inferior” Slavs.<sup>18</sup> On the whole, the atmosphere in Gorizia, Trieste and Istria was characterized by open ethnic conflict in competition for jobs and in school curricula. Italian irredentists argued that Italian culture and civilization were superior to that of the Slavs. They also argued that the Isonzo valley and the Istrian peninsula formed natural

frontiers and that the highlands east of the Isonzo were strategic positions for control of land traffic from east to west.

The spiritual father of Italian irredentism—an Awakener—was the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio. His play, La Nave (The Ship), about medieval Venice which celebrated Italy's past naval role in the Mediterranean, called the Italians to "arm the prow and sail towards the world." D'Annunzio grasped the role that the words and images of an artist might play in forging the modern masses into a weapon for a militant new nation.<sup>19</sup> He was strongly influenced by Social Darwinism and the prevailing theories of degeneration of society (Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of Western decadence). D'Annunzio saw the entire Italian race engaged once again in a struggle for existence.<sup>20</sup> This "first Duce" glorified Rome and its modern destiny in an imperialist world.

One distortion of nationalism—imperialism, that is the subordination of a few or several countries by one dominating state—became a fascist goal. The idea of a new empire emerged from the myth of Italian spiritual supremacy, and the Italians followed Mazzini's mission to civilize the barbarian. In the years following unification, Italy aspired to greater glory, yet returned from the Congress of Berlin in 1878 with no territorial or colonial gains, except a limited sphere of influence in Albania, and a realization that she held little stature with other European powers.

Another distortion of nationalism—irredentism, that is reclaiming historical lands—was driven by the myth of Italian superiority.<sup>21</sup> The Italians living in Venezia-Giulia

and Trentino called for redeeming historic Italian lands. This new theme was taken up by the Liberal government, for it had not succeeded in achieving its colonial ambitions.

### **Neutrality**

In August 1914, Austria-Hungary invaded Serbia, with German concurrence, but without consulting the Italians who pledged to remain neutral if an ally declared war on another country. The Austrians were seen as the aggressors, and most Italians were opposed to Italian participation in the war.<sup>22</sup> The former Liberal Prime Minister, Giovanni Giolitti, and the Church hierarchy pursued a neutralist policy. More fervently, the Syndicalists (Unions), Republicans and Socialists had long opposed continued Italian membership in the Triple Alliance, fearful that membership would sooner or later force Italy's entry into war. As early as March 1914 these parties as well as the anarchists, staged a "Red Week", a series of general strikes against Italian membership in the Alliance.<sup>23</sup>

Some Italians, however, were concerned that if Italy backed out and the Central Powers won the war, they might seek to avenge Italian betrayal. If the Entente won, there would be no reason for them to concede to Italy the coveted lands of Trentino or Venezia-Giulia. So the government tried to bargain with the Central Powers in early 1915. Italy would remain neutral if it received Trentino, the western side of the Isonzo river and a portion of the province of Gorizia-Gradisca. At the same time the Italians demanded that the city of Trieste and its environs should become a neutral independent city-state. Austria, however was resigned to only minor changes, agreeing to cede only Italian-speaking parts of

Trentino and a small corner of Gorizia-Gradisca province.<sup>24</sup> The Austrians feared that the Romanians would likewise demand territory in exchange for neutrality.

Germany sent its former Chancellor, Prince Bernhard Bulow, to Rome to negotiate for the Central Powers.<sup>25</sup> He was shocked at the demand for Trieste and said that Vienna would never cede Trieste. For the Austrians, Trieste was the key to the Adriatic; not only was it a major port for trade, but it was the principal port of the Austrian navy. Loss of Austrian control of Trieste would be the loss of the “lungs of the empire.” Nevertheless, Germany attempted to persuade Franz Joseph, and the Emperor agreed to cede all of Trentino, including the city of Trento, but he would not give up Trieste and the Adriatic coastal areas. The latter offer was unacceptable to the Italian Liberals who had pledged their support to the irredentists. The Foreign Minister, Baron Giovanni Sidney Sonnino, on February 12, 1915 withdrew from discussions and warned that operations by Austria-Hungary in the Balkans without Italian agreement were an infringement of Article VII of the Alliance.<sup>26</sup> He gave the Alliance time to consider his demands. On April 10 the Italians made their last demand: Trentino, Gorizia-Gradisca, an autonomous Trieste, the Dalmatian islands, a small indemnity and a guarantee of no interference in Albania. On May 10 the Alliance made a counter offer, giving Italy the western side of the Isonzo, the Italian speaking areas of Gorizia-Gradisca, Trentino, and making Trieste an independent free port. Prime Minister Antonio Salandra in a bold stroke of duplicity, sent a courier to London on February 16, 1915 with the suggestion that Italy was open to a good offer from the Entente. With the Russian victories in the Carpathians and the German failure to break through the

Marne, Salandra judged that victory for the Entente was in sight.<sup>27</sup> He demanded not only Trentino and Trieste, but all of Cisalpine Tyrol (to the Brenner Pass), much of Dalmatia and a share of the Ottoman empire. On April 27, Lord Edward Grey, the British Foreign Minister, countered with a compromise proposal that was accepted by Italy. The Italians did not negotiate further, for they feared that the war might soon be over. In addition, Russia, as protector of the Slavs, had insisted on halving Italy's claims in Dalmatia. In return for the whole of Trentino, Venezia-Giulia, including Gorizia-Gradisca and Trieste, Istria and the Dalmatian islands, Foreign Minister Sonnino compromised by relinquishing the port of Fiume to the South Slavs. Thus the Treaty of London was sealed.<sup>28</sup>

The treaty was the result of secret negotiations by Salandra and Sonnino. The Italian parliament and the king had little or no input. Salandra gained reluctant acceptance of the secret treaty by presenting a de facto agreement and by threatening to resign if the agreement was not accepted. His resignation would have created a governmental crisis. Therefore, the treaty was accepted by both the Italians and the Entente, provided that the Italians commenced fighting in one month to put pressure on the Austrians. The Italians declared war only against Austria. Yet, the rapidity of secret negotiations caught the Italian General Staff off guard. During the negotiations, the Italian General Staff was not informed about what was going on, and its war plans conflicted with the objectives outlined in the treaty. The general staff assumed that offensive operations would be conducted against France. On the eastern front of Venezia-Giulia, Italian defenses and offensive power were ill-prepared, and the Italians had only one month to mobilize. The Chief of the General Staff, Raffaele



Cadorna, and his staff found that mobilization required 35,000 officers and over four year classes to fill out its divisions (800,000 men). There was a deficit of shells, cartridges, machine guns and transport, and the morale of the active forces' cadre was low due to the trials of combat and occupation in the Libyan campaign.<sup>29</sup> The war almost immediately became one of stalemate on the Carso. For two years, the Italians and Austrians fought eleven indecisive campaigns along the Isonzo River. On October 24, 1917, disaster struck. The Austrians with German support broke through the Italian lines above Caporetto.<sup>30</sup> German and Austrian-Hungarian troops poured onto the Friulian plain forcing the Italians back to the Piave River to defend "the sacred soil of Italy."<sup>31</sup> The newly constituted Italian army regrouped and held at the river. Morale gradually rose and in November 1918 the Italians with Allied help won at Vittorio Veneto.<sup>32</sup>

In the battle zone along the Isonzo, the Friulians remained passive during the war. Since they were generally well treated by the Habsburgs and since their inclinations were toward Austro-Catholic conservatism, their allegiance was still with the Habsburgs. Although some gave assistance to their Italian cousins, the people of Friuli saw the war as a disruption of their lives largely brought on by outside Italian irredentist pressures.<sup>33</sup> The Friulians, as with many civilians caught in the struggle, either stayed in place or emigrated away from the front lines.

### **The South Slavs**

During World War I most of the non-Serb South Slavs remained loyal to the Habsburgs. Slovene and Croat troops distinguished themselves in the service of the empire.

The general support for the monarch by the Slovenes did not change during the first three years of the war. The leader of the Slovene Clerical Party, Slovene parliamentary leader and member of the Reichsrat, Anton Korosec, in a letter of January 1917 to the Austrian Prime Minister, expressed the loyalty of the Slovene people.

In Croatia, the situation was somewhat different. The Croats, who were under a chauvinistic Hungarian regime, preferred separation from the empire. Anton Mihailovic, a moderate Croat nationalist, supported by Stefan Radic of the Peasant Party, desired an independent state, while Croat Socialists came out for a union of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in a future South Slav state. The Slovenes kept themselves aloof from either movement. Anton Korosec, however, was eventually converted to the view that the destiny of the Slovenes lay in an autonomous South Slav state. In May 1917 Korosec demanded independence of all Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in one national state under the scepter of the Habsburgs. All three major Slovene parties—the Clerical Party, the Liberal Party and the Social Democrats—wanted more autonomy for Slovenia, but within the empire.<sup>34</sup> Most Slovenes and Croats expected the Habsburg Empire to survive the war.

Nevertheless, in 1914-1915 some prominent political figures from Croatia and Slovenia chose to emigrate and seek a South Slav nation independent of the empire. The most important émigré group was the Yugoslav Committee, led by Ante Trumbic and Frano Supilo. The committee was entirely unofficial. Its major task was to carry on a propaganda campaign to inform the Allies of the position of the south Slavs within the empire and to agitate for South Slav unification.

The committee's relations with the Serb government-in-exile were uneasy. Nikola Pasic, the Serb Premier, would have preferred to play the role of spokesmen for all South Slavs.<sup>35</sup> He wanted Serbia to act as the Piedmont of the South Slavs with a Serb Karadjordjevic dynasty forming the nucleus of a Yugoslav nation-state.<sup>36</sup> There was undoubtedly a divergence in the aims of the Serb government and the Yugoslav Committee. The Yugoslav Committee held a conference on Corfu in the summer of 1917 with representatives of the Serb government. Pasic insisted on a highly centralized state in which the Serbs, as the most numerous element, would be dominant, while Trumbic advocated an arrangement in which the constituent elements would have considerable autonomy. This federalist arrangement advocated by Trumbic emerged in the fourteen points of the Corfu Declaration, signed on July 20, 1917. The Serbs refused to sign the declaration. Thus the Yugoslav Committee was afraid that Pasic might bargain with the Great Powers at the expense of the Croats and Slovenes.<sup>37</sup>

The relations between the Yugoslav Committee and Italy were at the best strained. Andrea Torre, a member of the Italian Parliament, invited Supilo and Trumbic to Rome to open a Congress of Oppressed Nationalities.<sup>38</sup> There the South Slavs stressed that the unity and independence of the South Slavs were of vital importance to Italy, because a stable non-aggressive neighbor was better than an ambitious empire. Future boundaries could be settled amicably on the basis of ethnicity and the right of peoples to determine their own fate. Giolliti opened the congress, and a number of members of the Italian Parliament participated. At the conclusion of the congress, the conferees signed the Pact of Rome, which endorsed

the right of self-determination. Italy, however, did not officially sign the document, for the government saw that its commitment to self-determination could prejudice its case in future territorial claims.

The war was rapidly coming to a close, and in its final weeks the monarchy fell apart. In an effort to hold his lands together, Emperor Charles, Franz Joseph's successor, declared in October 1918 that Austria would be reorganized as a federal state, but it was too late. In an action paralleling events elsewhere in the empire, a National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was formed in Zagreb in October with the Slovene clerical leader Korosec as Council President. Most of the participants pushed for unification, except for the Croat Peasant Party which saw the new state as an enlarged Serbia.<sup>39</sup> The ideological and political stage was set for the tumultuous early years of Yugoslavia.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Kann, Nationalism, 373.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Sked, The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918, (London: Longman, 1989) 245.

<sup>3</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 389.

<sup>4</sup> The Entente originally was formalized between France and Russia in the late nineteenth century. Great Britain became a de facto member as a result of her treaties and alliances which opposed German intrusions, e.g. Morocco, in 1912.

<sup>5</sup> Kann and Zdenek, The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 343.

<sup>6</sup> The Friulians, to repeat what was discussed in Chapter 1, above, are not truly ethnic Italians, but a separate ethnic group who speak a Rhaetic-Romanic language.

<sup>7</sup> Angelo Ara, "Italian Educational Policy towards National Minorities", in Janusz Tomiak (Ed.) Schooling, Educational Policy and Ethnic Identity: Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940, Vol. 1 of two volumes, (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 266.

<sup>8</sup> Actually, in 1900, "pure" Italian, the Tuscano dialect was spoken by only five percent of the Italian nation. Each province of Italy spoke its own dialect and each inhabitant regarded himself as a Roman, Lombard, Venetian, etc. The Venetian dialect was spoken in the former Venetian Republic colonies on the Adriatic.

<sup>9</sup> In 1936, 86 percent of imports to Italy were by sea. Italian exports by sea were 52 percent. Italy could not do without sea or land access to the markets of northern and central Europe.

<sup>10</sup> Maxwell MacCartney and Paul Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy: 1914-1937, (New York: Fertig, 1972), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Mack Smith, Italy, 137.

<sup>12</sup> In September 1911, the Italian army invaded Libya, when it was clear that the French were consolidating their rule in Morocco.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Clark, Modern Italy, 1871-1955, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London: Longman, 1995), section 3.2.

<sup>14</sup> Oberdan was a republican from Trieste, who had deserted from the Austrian army and had taken refuge in Italy. In September 1882 he went back to Vienna to try to assassinate Franz Joseph, believing that the cause of Trieste needed a martyr. Before he could carry out his design he was arrested and executed, but public feeling in Trieste for this would-be assassin was so sensitive that he became a legend. The main piazza of Trieste is named after him.

## NOTES

<sup>15</sup> Queen Margherita of Italy became a living symbol of Italianita'. In 1893, in Trieste, an Italian student called Piccolo was expelled from the university for wearing a margherita (daisy) on his lapel. The major Trieste newspaper is still called Il Piccolo.

<sup>16</sup> Giovanni Sabbatucci, "Il problem dell'Irredentismo e le origini del movimento nazionalista in Italia", Storia Contemporanea, Vol. 1 No. 3 (197010), 490.

<sup>17</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 439.

<sup>18</sup> Dragovan Sepic, "Gli slavi del sud e l'irredentismo adriatico", Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali, Vol. 47 No. 2, 237.

<sup>19</sup> Isadora Duncan said, "perhaps the most remarkable lover of our time is Gabriele D'Annunzio. And this notwithstanding that he is small, bald, and except when his face lights up with enthusiasm, ugly. But when he speaks to a woman he likes, his face is transfigured." Besides being a ladies man, he was a war hero. He was awarded the Military Cross by the British for his bombing attacks on the Austrian fleet in the First World War. (Jared Becker, Nationalism and Culture: Gabrielle D'Annunzio and Italy after the Risorgimento, [New York: Lang, 1994], 53).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>22</sup> Sabbatucci, "Il Problema dell'Irredentismo", 468.

<sup>23</sup> Novak, Trieste, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>25</sup> Prince Bulow's wife was a member of the Roman aristocracy and well-connected with Italian decision makers.

<sup>26</sup> MacCartney, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 28-29.

<sup>27</sup> Mack Smith, Italy, 298.

<sup>28</sup> The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Balfour, did not relay the treaty to President Wilson, but the State Department was aware of the measure and belatedly notified the White House. Wilson considered the treaty as a private agreement.

<sup>29</sup> MacCartney, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 24.

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<sup>30</sup> For an excellent personal description of the Caporetto breakout, see Erwin Rommel's Infantry Attacks, (Washington DC: Infantry Journal, 1942).

<sup>31</sup> See Cyril Falls' The Battle of Caporetto, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966).

<sup>32</sup> Clark, Modern Italy, section 9.2. The French and British provided two divisions each. The American 186<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment assisted.

<sup>33</sup> Pier S. Leicht, Breve storia del Friuli, (Udine: Aquileia, 1930), 80.

<sup>34</sup> Charles and Barbara Jelavich, The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 258.

<sup>35</sup> Kann and Zdenek, The Peoples of the Eastern Habsburg Lands, 145.

<sup>36</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 154.

<sup>37</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 483.

<sup>38</sup> The Congress of Oppressed Nationalities was a group of representatives from minority ethnic groups living under the Dual Monarch. It included Czechs, Slovaks, as well as South Slavs. (Novak, Trieste, 25.)

<sup>39</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 126.

## CHAPTER 4

## THE INTERWAR YEARS

In the autumn of 1918, the Italians won the war at Vittorio Veneto, and the Italian aspirations for regaining terra irredenta were about to be realized. Italy had entered the war against the Dual Monarchy, but with the demise of the Habsburg Empire Italian claims were no longer primarily directed against Austria but against the South Slavs. Italian Liberals expected Yugoslavia to become an unpleasant neighbor on the shores of the Adriatic insisting on the ethnic principle of self-determination. Thus, Italy abandoned much of her previous ethnic argument for Venezia-Guilia, Istria and Dalmatia. Italy would now justify territorial gains based on strategic frontiers and economic ties, which would give Italy further advantage in retaining an inordinately large part of Istria and a string of Dalmatian islands.<sup>1</sup>

After the Allied victory in November 1918, the new prime minister, Vittorio Orlando, went to Versailles to demand implementation of the 1915 Treaty of London.<sup>2</sup> There, Orlando and Sonnino were confronted with President Woodrow Wilson, who declared his nation fought for the self-determination of oppressed nationalities.<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Sonnino, the former foreign minister, Carlo Sforza, although officially out of the government, advised that the peace conference would pay homage to Wilson's principles, but each participant would think only of safeguarding his own interests. "We alone---will risk being in disagreement with Wilson---and risk compromising all of our interests."<sup>4</sup>



Following this principle of self-determination, Wilson proposed a line dividing Italy and the new Yugoslav state based on ethnic criteria and refused to concede either Fiume or Dalmatia to Italy.<sup>5</sup> Thus Wilson became the arch-villain to the Italians. Through negotiations and threatened withdrawal from the talks, Italy was able to acquire Trentino to the Brenner Pass and Trieste. The Italian army occupied Istria and Dalmatia, placing both under de facto Italian sovereignty.

Trieste itself was given to Italy without much debate. As the terminus of the Sudbahn railway, and as a great mercantile emporium for Central Europe, it was a rich prize. It was not such an unqualified advantage for the city of Trieste itself, since a political frontier now severed the city from its German and Slav hinterland, leaving it a head without a body. Carlo Sforza foresaw the possible decline in commerce. Fiume was more difficult for it was not discussed in the London Treaty. In 1919, however, some nationalists wanted to renounce the treaty claims on Slav speaking Dalmatia in exchange for Fiume where the Italians represented over eighty percent of the population.

On February 7, 1919, Italy asked that the Treaty of London to be modified to include Fiume.<sup>6</sup> Italy already had won Istria, Trieste and the Dalmatian Islands, then why not Fiume. This additional demand, however, caused the Allies to perceive Italy as opportunist, and it weakened Italy's position. President Wilson, who objected to all secret treaties, stated that if Italy did not adhere to the London pact, the other great powers were free to discuss the claims of both Italy and Yugoslavia regarding Venezia-Giulia. The Yugoslavs at the Peace Conference (represented by the Serbs only) pointed out that Italy

had agreed to the ethnic principle in the Pact of Rome, but as noted above, the pact was not signed by the Italian government. The Yugoslavs claimed that the new border should run along the old Italo-Austrian frontier from the west of the Isonzo River, giving Yugoslavia Tarvisio, Gorizia, Istria, (including Trieste) Fiume and Dalmatia. Wilson proposed that Italy should relinquish Dalmatia and Fiume. There was obviously no boundary in Istria and Venezia-Giulia which would satisfy both Italy and Yugoslavia. Frustrated, the president drew the borders along the “Wilson Line”. (Map 11). This attempt at compromise was not an ethnic division, for it left to Italy 370,000 Slovenes and Croats, while 75,000 Italians were left in Yugoslavia. Angered, Orlando temporarily withdrew the Italian delegation for a few weeks. Upon the return of the Italians to the conference, the Italians were able to obtain most of the Istrian peninsula with Trieste and Pola, but not Fiume.

After Wilson’s incapacitation by a stroke in January 1920, the Italian position improved since Wilson could not veto any other Italian claims, especially its claims for Fiume. The conference left Italy to finalize its north-eastern border through direct dealings with Yugoslavia. On November 12, 1920, the Allies signed the Treaty of Rapallo, which gave Italy the Kanal Valley (northern Friuli) and Venezia-Giulia, including the line of Italian occupation. Yugoslavia received Dalmatia, except for the city of Zara (Zadar). Fiume was made an independent free port.

Fiume had been an issue from the early years of the century onwards. The Italians felt that ports on the Adriatic and Aegean were important as sacred symbols of Italianita’.

At the war's end the Italian citizens of Fiume invited Italian warships and troops, but the Allies ruled that occupation should be inter-Allied, consisting of British, American, French and Italian forces. This Allied occupation further raised tensions with the Italian speaking majority. After the murder of five French occupation soldiers as a result of rioting by the Italians, the French withdrew.<sup>7</sup> On September 12, 1919, in a comic opera scene, D'Annunzio with his Legionari marched from Trieste to occupy Fiume. Rather than risking a confrontation, the Allies abandoned the city to the Italians. The new Prime Minister, Francesco Nitti, attempted to deploy regular Italian Army troops to facilitate the transition of the city into an independent state under the Charter of the League of Nations, but his generals refused a confrontation with D'Annunzio. Next, Nitti established a blockade by the Italian Navy to force D'Annunzio out, but D'Annunzio circumvented the blockade by forming his own "Illyrian pirates." The Fiume imbroglio ended when Mussolini sent an Italian general to assume administration of the city in September 1923, and on January 27, 1924, Mussolini signed the Pact of Rome which gave Italy sovereignty over Fiume. (Map 12).

### **Yugoslavia Between the Wars**

The territorial changes introduced after the First World War were the result of bargaining among the great power victors. Despite Wilson's pledge for self-determination, the new nation-state of Yugoslavia had little influence at Versailles, and the hopes of the South Slavs for a unified state were to be confronted with traditional ethnic rivalries. The nucleus of the new Yugoslavia was formed out of the kingdom of Serbia. On December 1,

1918, the Serbs called for a constitutional assembly and dominated the proceedings. On St Vitus Day, June 28, 1921, the new government published the Vidovdan Constitution.<sup>8</sup>

The Serb Premier, Nikola Pasic had achieved a pyrrhic victory in the approval of the Vidovdan constitution, which made his ambition of a kingdom of Greater Serbia a reality. It did nothing to heal the deep rift between the Serbs and non-Serbs, the tendency of the former to impose hegemony over the latter. The balance of power within the government tended to lean towards the monarch rather than towards the single chamber Parliament (Skupstina), as the constitution conferred considerable authority to King Alexander.

The new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes faced significant problems. In addition to meeting the complexities of serving three south Slav linguistic groups, the kingdom also had Montenegrins, Bosnian Muslims and large minorities of Albanians, Romanians, Turks, Czechs, Slovaks, Russians, Italians, Bulgars and Greeks. It also had to confront the tensions among three main religious groups—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim. Besides the problems of integrating this myriad of linguistic, ethnic and religious groups, there were also formidable administrative problems. Six customs areas, five currencies, three banking systems and four legal systems had to be merged.<sup>9</sup>

The founders of Yugoslavia assumed incorrectly that South Slavs spoke a common language, had a common origin, and were ethnically similar. They did not recognize ethnic differences connected with religion, memories of medieval states and historical traditions, for these were considered artificial or irrelevant.<sup>10</sup> Ethnic separateness and identity did

persist, and ethnic aspirations more often than not overcame loyalty to the new state.<sup>11</sup>

Some ethnic communities, particularly the Croats, feared loss of identity. Yet many citizens of the new kingdom hoped for the kind of nation that Bishop Strossmayer and his contemporaries had advocated.<sup>12</sup>

In the domestic political arena, the diverse ethnic groups pursued varying goals. The parliament malfunctioned from the beginning because of the conflict between Slovene-Croat desires for federalism and Serb centralization. For Serbia, unification meant the liberation of remaining unredeemed lands, while for Croatia and Slovenia unification meant enhanced regional autonomy.<sup>13</sup> The liberal-democratic institutions in the kingdom were neither sufficiently developed nor rooted deeply enough to give representative government an opportunity to develop.

Constant turmoil reigned in the Parliament. The Croat Peasant Party leader, Radic, constantly disputed the policies of the Serb Radical Prime Minister Pasic and his successors. In June of 1928, insults between the two parties were answered by pistol shots, and Radic was mortally wounded.<sup>14</sup> In January 1929, King Alexander dissolved parliament, suspended the constitution and appointed a new government. A decade of political turmoil was over. The political system of the Vidovdan Constitution had not been able to establish a compromise between the interests of nationalities and regions.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Dictatorship**

The ease with which Alexander was able to overthrow the constitution demonstrated that the democratic experiment had failed. Alexander knew that he could

rely on the army because the majority of the senior officers were loyal Serbs.<sup>16</sup> The royal coup provoked no real protest. At first, the king was popular. He de-emphasized the Serb aspects of his government, encouraging other ethnic groups to participate for the unity of the country. Many Slovenes joined the government or accepted lucrative posts in the civil or diplomatic service or in state-controlled enterprises, because they had the advantage of being bilingual in both Slovene and Serbo-Croatian. Few Croats and Serbs had that ability.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the Slovenes were the best educated nationality in Yugoslavia.

Alexander sought to reduce the influence of regional or ethnic interests. In so doing he introduced several unpopular laws. One was the Sokol Law of December 4, 1929 which dissolved Catholic Sokols (physical training and cultural societies among the Croats and Slovenes).<sup>18</sup> The king also discouraged purely Serb activities. He intended to merge all ethnic groups into a common sentiment towards a unified Yugoslavia.

In September 1931, Alexander drew up a new constitution which legitimized his special powers acquired during the dictatorship. The new constitution provided for an Assembly elected by universal male suffrage, and a Senate, half of whose members were appointed by the king and half by the local government assemblies. It introduced new administrative units, known as banovine. (Map 14). Each banovina took the geographical name of a local river. Much of the former Slovenia was renamed Dravska, after the Drava River. The governor (ban) of each banovina was directly responsible to the government in Belgrade. All the lines of power led back to Belgrade, and there the king exercised ultimate control.<sup>19</sup>

In 1932 Milan Srstkcic, a hard-line Serb became prime minister. As a result of his determined pro-Serb policies, discontent mounted throughout the country. In Croatia there were violent incidents involving Croat nationalists. Even Slovenia was agitated, and in the second largest city of Maribor, a “communist plot” was unearthed among the officers of the garrison, and the accused received death sentences. Opposition to the regime intensified, highlighted by the Zagreb Manifesto, issued by Croats and Slovenes, who asked for changes to make the government “an association of interests to safeguard the three nations.” Even the perennially moderate Korosec, who asked for autonomy for the Slovenes, was arrested and interned.

Thus, after four years, the dictatorship had succeeded in alienating all the organized parties of the country, with its own supporters becoming increasingly divided.<sup>20</sup> In addition to the political crisis, the world-wide depression of the thirties affected the already weak economy. The chief export, agricultural products, fell as world prices collapsed, and the National Bank’s supply of foreign exchange ran short as the export trade fell heavily. Exchange control prevented money from leaving the country and foreign trade was paralyzed. The isolation of the government from large numbers of its citizens became increasingly apparent. On October 9, 1934, during a state visit to France, King Alexander was assassinated by an agent of the Croat extremists, the Ustashas.<sup>21</sup> In the royal succession, Alexander’s son Peter was next in line, but he was only a few years old; therefore, Prince Paul (Alexander’s cousin) acted as regent.<sup>22</sup> Although he hated politics, Prince Paul reluctantly assumed a leading role.<sup>23</sup>

During the reign of the Regent Paul in the 1930s the Slovenes benefited from the union. Due to their relatively strong financial institutions (cooperative banks and cooperative marketing unions) and less dependence on agriculture, they did not suffer the detrimental effects of economic depression as much as the rest of the country. They also increased their stature within the social and political realms. The Slovenes, few in number (1.2 million out of 12 million), skillfully exploited their economic and linguistic advantages to enable them to maintain a balance between the Croats and Serbs and to obtain a large measure of autonomy. They were able to maintain their schooling in the Slovene language and to establish an additional university (in Maribor, besides the University at Lubiana). The principal grievances of the Slovenes were administrative rather than political. Slovenes complained chiefly of excessive centralization. For instance, they could not build a road without Belgrade's authority.<sup>19</sup>

To the Croats, the dictatorship reinforced their antagonism against Serb style centralism. Out of this dissatisfaction grew the secessionist Ustasha movement increasingly inspired by Nazism and Fascism.<sup>20</sup> The historical roots of the Ustashes lay in the nineteenth century. Ante Starcsevic was a Croat poet who founded the Party of Croat Rights while Croatia was under repressive Hungarian rule after 1867. He promoted a distinct Croat tradition, a Unity of Croatia as opposed to Strossmayer's Union of Yugoslavs. Starcsevic was born in the Serb-dominated former military frontier, where he nurtured a radical form of racism against the Serbs.<sup>21</sup> The Ustashes believed the Yugoslav government under the royal house was a 'great-Serb dictatorship' which could be overthrown only by mass



action; therefore the Ustashas and their confederates, the Frankovci, performed terrorist acts or violence against the Serbs. The majority of Ustashas were peasants from the poorer mountain regions of Croatia and their rebellions were prompted by high taxes, corrupt administration and the difficult conditions of military service.<sup>22</sup>

The Ustashas justified their spiritual values of traditional morality and religion as a bulwark against Marxist materialism and Western decadence. Many of the leaders of the Ustashas took refuge in Fascist Italy in the thirties. Thus the Italian Fascists saw a potential ally in the Ustashas, began to finance them and promoted their fascist ideology in order to gain the advantage from the opportunity to intervene in Yugoslav internal affairs.

### **The Pre-War Years**

In 1920, Yugoslavia joined the Little Entente (Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Romania) in order to prevent a resurgent Hungary from threatening the peace settlement and to prevent a Habsburg restoration. Hungary developed at that time a friendship with Italy. Yugoslavia's one great power supporter was France, for she defended Yugoslavia politically and economically, and stood firm on the territorial clauses of the peace treaties. By the 1930s, the Slovenes and moderate Croats, as opposed to the extreme Ustashas, feared the growing strength and rhetoric of Fascist Italy, and therefore supported Alexander's foreign policy of alliance with France.

The victory of the French Socialists in the elections of 1936 and world-wide depression, however, caused France to withdraw much of her financial support to Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslavs realized that the policy of alliances under French influence was no longer practicable. On the worst of terms with her neighbors, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria, and with her French patron alienated and preoccupied, Yugoslavia was isolated and needed alliances for defense. The prince regent did his best to find security by linking the Little Entente with a pact of Balkan States (Greece, Romania, Turkey).<sup>23</sup> The regency government realized, however, that regional alliances could not protect Yugoslavia against its more aggressive neighbors. Without adequate support from Britain and France, the regency veered to a policy of neutrality in 1936. Early in 1937 Yugoslavia signed a treaty of friendship with Italy, and a pact of "eternal and indissoluble" friendship with Bulgaria. Many individuals within the government, however, especially Serbs, felt alarm at the successive departures from the policy of reliance on France and the Little Entente.

With the disruption of traditional trade patterns during the depression, Yugoslavia, as other East European states, came to depend more and more on Germany as her main customer and supplier. During the last years of the thirties about fifty-five percent of foreign trade was with Germany and an additional fifteen percent was with Italy. Because of this economic dependence, especially sale of agricultural products in exchange for manufactured items, Prince Paul was forced to rely more on the Axis.

By the end of 1938, the prime minister, Milan Stojadinovic, was convinced that he was backing the right horse in the Germans as trade conditions improved, and that the time

was ripe for an election.<sup>24</sup> The prince-regent called for a national government to work out transitional arrangements to a new constitution, which would satisfy a majority of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. This action caused a wave of enthusiasm, for a common dissatisfaction with the government's pro-Axis and dictatorial policies had drawn the Croat Peasant Party and Serb opposition parties closer together. The election resulted in a public rejection of the government's policies and led to formation of a new coalition government.<sup>25</sup> Yet for radical Croats this government did not satisfy their desire for more autonomy. More moderate Croats, hoping to divert the populace away from the radicalism of the Ustashes, convinced the crown to set up a semi-autonomous Province of Croatia under the Understanding (Sporazum) of 1939.<sup>26</sup> Still, neither side was fully satisfied with this understanding. The more radical Croats wanted independence, and Serb opposition leaders saw the agreement as a half-measure which separated Croats and Serbs at a crucial hour.

The beginning of the Second World War increased Yugoslavia's dependence on the Third Reich. Although she was able to maintain neutrality for sixteen months, German economic and political pressure grew to the point that the regency, on March 25, 1941, joined the Axis satellites and adhered to the Tripartite Pact of Germany, Italy and Japan. Two days later, on March 27th, in reaction to the signing of the pact, the military staged a bloodless military coup which brought the regency to an end.<sup>27</sup> The coup brought together all opposition parties into a broad coalition with the object of avoiding the commitment to

the Tripartite Pact. Immediately the government signed a treaty of friendship with Moscow, but there was too little time to further develop a foreign policy, for war was at hand.

### **The Rise of Fascism**

The events occurring in neighboring Italy strongly influenced Yugoslav politics. The rise of fascism exploited strong anti-Slav and anti-Marxist sentiment. Italian Fascism was a volatile mixture of ex-Socialists, Syndicalists, Futurists and war veterans.<sup>28</sup> The post-war years were those of economic depression in Italy (particularly in the northern industrial areas). Industry needed to revert to peacetime production and the return of four million soldiers to the economy meant unemployment. There were 130,000 demobilized officers, mostly lower middle class, who were eager to retain the status they had achieved in the army. The combination of unemployment, inflation and labor unrest threatened the newly demobilized soldiers. In their view the central liberal government had abdicated its responsibilities. Many of the discontented were susceptible to radical right wing propaganda and were drawn into squadristi (bands which terrorized the countryside during the post war years). Both anti-Socialists and ultra-nationalists gained active support from hordes of young ex-servicemen, especially the black-shirted commandos, who found it difficult to return to civilian life. These veterans became the cadre of fascism.

Trieste was a hotbed of fascism, not only because of the threat of socialism, but also for the Italian irredentist spirit which manifested itself in anti-Slav feelings. As soon as the Italian army occupied Venezia-Giulia in 1918, extreme Italian nationalists began to persecute

Slovenes.<sup>29</sup> The Italians feared that the large Slavic population in this area could create a demand for a plebiscite. The unsettled border situation, together with divergent economic and nationalist interests, provided a fertile ground for the squadristi. In early 1919 during a fascist street assembly, a fascist youth was knifed. The local fascist leader, Francesco Giunta, immediately claimed that Slav nationalists provoked the incident and marched his group to the Hotel Balkan, headquarters of Slovene cultural and political organizations in Trieste, Slovenski narodni dom (Slovene people's house), and burned the building down as nearby Italian occupation troops joined in the assault.

By 1924, the Italians instituted a radical Italianization program in Venezia-Giulia. Slovene political and social leaders, including priests and intellectuals, were interned to an island off the Dalmatian coast. The once flourishing Slovene cooperative system in banking and marketing collapsed, forcing the peasants to become indebted to Italian banks. When the peasants failed to repay their debts, their property was foreclosed. Slovene and Croat schools became Italian state schools. The Slavic press and political parties were suppressed or abolished. The use of Slovene and Croat languages was forbidden in all state institutions and in all public places, including churches.<sup>30</sup> Italian had to be spoken in public offices, courts, schools and churches. Even German and Slav surnames were Italianized, and inscriptions on tombstones were changed.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately in order to make the region as completely Italian as possible, the state encouraged immigration from the south.

Such measures met with strong resistance. Local priests led a cultural protest, continuing to preach in German or Slovene. In the newly occupied regions of Venezia-Giulia where Slovenes and Croats were in a majority, greater resistance took form. Italian teachers were driven out of schools, bombs went off regularly in public buildings, and terrorists assassinated police and militiamen. Although Mussolini spoke in favor of good Yugoslav relations when the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1924, the rigid program of Italianization embittered relations between the two states. Numerous migrations of Slovenes and Croats from Venezia-Giulia to Yugoslavia resulted in a Yugoslav irredentist movement. When the first Slavic resistance group attempted terrorist tactics in 1929, the fascists reacted with harsh counter-measures and executed a number of Slovenes and Croats. These martyrs became symbols of Italian repression of the Slavs.<sup>38</sup>

The Socialists of Trieste and Venezia-Giulia met a similar fate. The large working class had become increasingly militant. As members of the Socialist Party, they supported an independent Trieste rather than annexation by Italy. This stand resulted from the fact that Triestine industrial workers and their union leaders had become multi-ethnic in composition since the turn of the century. The Slovene-Croat Socialist Party had joined the Italian Socialists to form a unified socialist program. Following the war, the potential political strength of the workers frightened the region's middle-classes who formed the backbone of the Italian nationalist movement, and the fascists ably exploited this fear. The same fascist armed bands fought against general strikes of 1919-1921. When the workers built barricades, the fascists, assisted by the occupation army, demolished them.

### **Mussolini and the Fascist Myth**

Benito Mussolini was born in the Italian province of Romagna in 1883. His father, a socialist blacksmith, named his son after Benito Juarez (the Mexican revolutionary). In his youth Mussolini became that classic figure of Italian society, the embittered poor intellectual. He read voraciously, especially in literature and philosophy, while supporting himself by a series of short-lived jobs in school-teaching and in the building trades. The socialist movement offered him a means of self-expression.<sup>39</sup>

Mussolini was influenced by the French syndicalist, Georges Sorel, who sought a moral stiffening of mankind, which he believed was naturally decadent. All progress was an illusion. Social change would not come naturally as Marx had suggested, but by the active will of the workers.<sup>40</sup> Vilfredo Pareto shared Sorel's ideas but added the importance of the function of myths in stirring the workers and the theory of an elite. The elite, according to Pareto, were those individuals who had a remarkable degree of intelligence, character and presence. The elite needed to use the motive forces of religion, tradition and patriotism to urge a people toward a given social objective and even beyond it as a spiritual goal. In Mussolini's mind, Britain and France had become decadent, but Italy was a new spiritual force. The Nietzschean Superman, Julius Caesar, created an empire. Mussolini considered his destiny was to recreate the empire.

As the First World War approached, he saw the war as a reaction against positivism and materialism, and it was necessary to purify and renew the Italians.<sup>41</sup> The entry of

Italy into the war would be the victory of Mazzinian Italy, the opportunity to introduce the superior Roman culture to the barbarians. On November 14, 1914 in the Italian Socialist daily Avanti, Mussolini began to explain why war was necessary for the destiny of the Italian people. He turned his flaming oratory against the neutralists. On November 25th the orthodox Socialist Party leaders expelled Mussolini from the party. Mussolini went off to war and came back to battle his new enemy, his former socialist colleagues.

When peace came, Mussolini formed Fasci di Combattimento in 1919. The Fasci had the usual radical program--a constituent assembly, abolition of the Senate, land for the peasants and seizure of church property. The movement, however, was restricted to a few major centers of ultra-patriotism--Milano, Bologna, and Trieste.<sup>42</sup> The real breakthrough came in central Italy, in the province of Emilia, where landlords and lease holders reacted against the victorious socialist leagues and against governmental agricultural policy. The fascist squad became the ideal instrument for breaking up socialist dominance in the country. By late 1921 fascism already meant strike-breaking or enforced enrollment of workers into newly formed national unions. Mussolini saw these unions as a means of disciplining and mobilizing labor.

Mussolini embarked on a program of consensus building, for he realized that he needed more than thugs. He strove to recruit from other parties and classes. To gain acceptance, he seriously considered an alternative route to power through legal and parliamentary channels. The ras, leaders of local squadristi, were becoming uncontrollable. In August 1921 Mussolini agreed to sign a Pact of Pacification to bring about a truce with the



socialists to de-escalate civil strife. The ras rejected it, convinced that agrarian fascism would lose impetus. Mussolini was infuriated by the insubordination: "Fascism can do without me? Doubtless, but I too can do very well without Fascism".<sup>43</sup>

In the compromise, Mussolini acknowledged squadristo as an indispensable and integral part of the movement, and the ras recognized him as the indispensable Duce. The movement was converted into a political party, the national Fascist Party. In return, Mussolini repudiated the truce with the socialists and proposed national syndicalism under party control. As the new party appeared to have discarded most of its radical demands, funds flowed in from both the industrial and agrarian sectors, while its political rivals--Liberals, Socialists and Catholics- rapidly became more disorganized.

This parliamentary paralysis gave Mussolini an excellent opportunity to make a significant breakthrough. Mussolini promised an acceptable form of fascism--a movement to restore Italian power and prestige, to revive the economy by increasing productivity and abolishing perceived harmful state control and to reestablish law and order. In order to accomplish the latter, he had to reel in the ras. One of his first acts was to transform the squadristi into a national militia under his direct command.

In October 1922, the Fascists planned to concentrate at Perugia for a march on Rome. Fearful of civil war, the king considered declaring a state of siege and calling out the army, but his staff advised a more conciliatory action. On the morning of October 28th, the king offered Mussolini a place in the government, which Mussolini accepted and used to suppress the other parties.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Fascist State**

Fascism introduced a new element: the “nation is also the state.”

“The Fascist state is higher and more powerful than the personality, it is a force, but a spiritual force that takes all the forms of a moral and intellectual life of man.”<sup>45</sup>

Between 1925 and 1932 Mussolini successfully built an authoritarian state. The opposition parties and their press, together with non-fascist trade unions had been eliminated. The militia was brought under control, and the police had been efficiently reorganized.<sup>46</sup> The corporate state was instituted.

Fascism became almost a religious conception. Italy was realizing its destiny, and the Italians were proud of their state and accomplishments. The cult of the Duce developed rapidly after 1926 and its devotees used religious symbolism to proclaim Mussolini as a new Messiah. “Mussolini is always right” and “Believe, Obey, Fight” became slogans of the corporate state. Mussolini stated in his creed that, “Discipline is the keystone of the power of nations”<sup>47</sup>

The modern Italians inherited the myth of Rome. For only the second time in history there was a unified Italy; therefore there was a temptation to emulate the achievements of the Romans. In schools Italian history stressed the Roman heritage, and a classical education was mandatory for those entering the ruling elite.<sup>48</sup> The party’s propagandists increasingly provided examples of parallels between ancient Rome and the fascist regime. These included the colonization of Africa, control of the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, and creation of an invincible army.

Italy intended to be a Mediterranean power, with a long coastline, two large offshore islands and colonial possessions in Africa; she also controlled Rhodes and the Dodecanese islands in the Aegean Sea. Italy was also a continental power, bordering France, Austria and the Balkans. As a Mediterranean power she required a strong navy; as a continental power she required a strong army. A powerful air force would enable her to control her space. For a country with limited resources this military ambition was too extensive; she had to establish priorities and manage her resources carefully.

The possession of the Brenner Pass and the seaport of Trieste strengthened Italy's position in the north and presented opportunities for further expansion in central and eastern Europe. The emergence of Yugoslavia prevented Italy from annexing large tracts of the Dalmatian coast as promised in the Treaty of London, but the new Slav state was divided and unstable and posed no serious threat. Italy was prisoner in the Mediterranean for Britain and France controlled access to the seas. Mussolini resented the Allied dominance and declared that Italy could only become a truly independent great power "by breaking the chains and marching towards the oceans".<sup>49</sup>

In pursuing his aims of becoming a great power, Mussolini had to look elsewhere, to Germany. Although the initial contacts between Hitler and Mussolini were less than impressive, Mussolini saw that the anti-Bolshevism espoused by the National Socialists could be the connecting link in establishing better relations with a potential ally. In October 1936 Count Galeazzo Ciano, the new foreign minister, went to Berlin to meet with his counterpart, Joachim von Ribbentrop. As a result of the October meeting, Italy adhered to

the anti-Comintern Pact with Germany and Japan. On November 1, 1936, Mussolini made a speech at Milan in which he referred to a Berlin-Rome line as an “axis around which can revolve all those European states with a will to collaboration and peace”.<sup>50</sup> Within less than a year Mussolini accepted an invitation to visit Germany. While Mussolini had not overcome his dislike of Germany and the Germans, he was impressed with the German military might. The Fuhrer arranged a spectacular show of army maneuvers and armament.

In May 1938, when Hitler returned his state visit to Italy, the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop offered the Italians a military alliance. Mussolini refused it on the grounds of strong public opposition. Yet when Hitler seized Prague in March 1939, Mussolini decided to invade Albania the following month. Neither action resulted in international repercussions. Thus when Ciano and Ribbentrop met in May 1939, the Italians were prepared to make an alliance. Mussolini, however, added a caveat that war should not be risked until 1942, because the Duce had planned an international exhibition in Rome to raise precious foreign currency. The Germans countered that since a defensive treaty was pointless, a Pact of Steel should be written:

“If it should happen, against the wishes and hopes of the contracting parties, that one of them becomes involved in warlike complications with another Power or with other Powers, the other contracting party will come to its aid as an ally and will support it with all its military forces on land, on sea and in the air.”<sup>51</sup>

Italy was now committed, giving Hitler carte blanche to attack Poland and to plunge into World War II. In August 1939 Ciano visited Hitler and was told the shocking news

that Germany intended to make war on Poland. Clearly, Italy wanted to abandon their commitments to the Germans rapidly, but that presented problems. Honor and the need to overcome the reputation as a faithless nation acquired in 1914-1915, were concerns. Italy managed to stay out of the war in 1939. In the spring of 1940, however, the war became real as the British cut off German coal shipments to Italy. If he did not join the battle Hitler might wreak vengeance and retake Trentino and Trieste. Mussolini was a bellicose nationalist. He wanted war, he glorified war. Now he had to fight.

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<sup>1</sup> Kann, A History of the Habsburg Empire, 509.

<sup>2</sup> With the fall of Tsarist Russia, there were unfavorable repercussions upon Italian claims. The Entente distrusted Italy, for its bargaining and for its failure to declare war against Germany until August 1916.

<sup>3</sup> The Fourteen Points included the right of self-determination, taken from the Corfu Declaration.

<sup>4</sup> Sforza, Contemporary Italy, 211.

<sup>5</sup> The Serbs were initial participants at Versailles. Slovenes and Croats were not represented.

<sup>6</sup> Fiume was created as a separate port-city by Maria Theresa for the Hungarian Crown.

<sup>7</sup> MacCartney, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 84. The troops were French Colonials from Morocco.

<sup>8</sup> The Vidovdan or St. Vitus Day held a high place in Serb tradition, for the Serbs, although defeated in battle, killed the Ottoman sultan in Kosovo on that day in the fourteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 131.

<sup>10</sup> Aleksa Djilas, The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953, cAMBR Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991, 44.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>12</sup> Edvard Kocbek, the twentieth century Slovene poet, stated that the South Slavs developed in a different WAY way from those peoples of western Europe. They were torn between the romantic Herderian principles of the right maintaining ethnic characteristics, advocated by Strossmayer and followed by the non-Serbs, and the realpolitik of maintaining the state, advocated by the Serbs.

<sup>13</sup> Stefan K. Pavlowitch, The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and its Problems, 1918-1988, Columbus, OH, 1988, 2.

<sup>14</sup> His murderer was the Montenegrin radical deputy, Punisha Ractic, a leader of one of the Serb Chetnik organizations.

<sup>15</sup> Pavlowitch, The Improbable Survivor, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 158.

<sup>17</sup> A. Djilas, The Contested Country, 80.

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- <sup>18</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 179. Sokols were popular during the previous century as forums for promoting ethnic consciousness.
- <sup>19</sup> Archibald Lyall, "The Making of Modern Slovenia", Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 17 No. 50 (January 1939), 414.
- <sup>20</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 183.
- <sup>21</sup> It was later discovered that the assassination had been plotted by the Croat extremist Pavelich and by Mihajlov, the Bulgarian head of the IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization).
- <sup>22</sup> Pavlowitch, The Improbable Survivor, 7.
- <sup>23</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 163.
- <sup>24</sup> Archibald Lyall, "The Making of Modern Slovenia", Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 17 No. 50 (January 1939), 414.
- <sup>25</sup> Pavlowitch, The Improbable Survivor, 6.
- <sup>26</sup> See Chapter 1. The Military Frontier occupied much of Croatia, under the Habsburgs, but it was manned by Serbs.
- <sup>27</sup> A. Djilas, The Contested Country, 119.
- <sup>28</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 187-196.
- <sup>29</sup> Stojadinovic as Foreign Minister went to Berlin in early 1928, where he met and was impressed with Hitler. In the 1930's while in Paris he made it clear that Yugoslavia no longer placed any confidence in French assurances of support and he rejected a mutual assistance pact, which he regarded as link to the Paris-Moscow bloc. (Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav People, 148.)
- <sup>30</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 197.
- <sup>31</sup> Jelavich, The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 203.
- <sup>32</sup> Winston Churchill stated that day, "At dawn this morning, the Yugoslav people have found their 'soul'." (Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 197.)
- <sup>33</sup> The Futurists were members of an avant-garde group of artists and writers proclaiming the violence and excitement of an industrial-modernist society. (John Whittam, Fascist Italy, [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980,] 21.)
- <sup>34</sup> Marshal Badoglio prepared a program on how to break Slavic resistance to Italian annexation. This program was approved by Orlando (Ibid, 34).

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>36</sup> As the author's wife's father was an Italianized Slovene, named Biziak', serving in the Italian air force, he had to change his name to Bisanzi.

<sup>37</sup> Although the author has not found specific numbers of emigrants, Carl Ipsen states that over 100,000 southern Italians found their way to former Austrian lands. (Carl Ipsen, Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996] 196).

<sup>38</sup> In 1937 the Italians modified their repression on the Slovenes and Croats in newly acquired lands of Venezia Giulia. A five year non-aggression pact permitted the Slovene and Croat minorities to use their own languages while Italy asked Yugoslavia to curb the Slav irredentist activities. This partial improvement of Italo-Yugoslav relations was brought on by Italian fears associated with the rise of Nazi Germany and the economic stress caused by war in Ethiopia.

<sup>39</sup> Clark, Modern Italy, section 10.5.

<sup>40</sup> Herman Finer, Mussolini's Italy, London: Archon, 1964, 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> Positivism is a theory that knowledge based on natural phenomena can be verified by empirical methods. Materialism is a theory that only matter is reality. Both theories were popular in the nineteenth century.

<sup>42</sup> Clark, Modern Italy, section 10.5.

<sup>43</sup> Whittam, Fascist Italy, 32.

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Wiskemann, Fascism in Italy, Its Development and Influence, London: Macmillan, 1969, 17.

<sup>45</sup> D'Assac, Doctrines du nationalisme, 124. Notice the parallels to the thoughts of Pareto and Sorel.

<sup>46</sup> Whittam, Fascist Italy, 59.

<sup>47</sup> D'Assac, Doctrines du nationalisme, 126.

<sup>48</sup> Whittam, Fascist Italy, 86.

<sup>49</sup> Wiskemann, Fascism in Italy, 60.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 75.



## CHAPTER 5

THE CALL TO ARMS  
WORLD WAR II

In attempting to balance its foreign policy between the reality of economic dependence on German trade and the desire for maintaining traditional Allied ties, Yugoslavia managed to remain neutral for about sixteen months. For the moment it was in Germany's interest that Yugoslavia remain neutral because Hitler feared that Britain and France might open a front in the Balkans. As he was already secretly preparing to attack the Soviet Union, he was eager to have the Balkans as a peaceful hinterland; however, Mussolini's invasion of Greece on October 28, 1940, (of which he had not informed Hitler), complicated Germany's strategic plans. In early 1941 British troops disembarked in the Balkans.<sup>1</sup>

Hitler needed passage through Yugoslavia to support his efforts in the Greek theater, and in order to gain it he promised more economic aid to the Yugoslavs. The Belgrade coup caught both Hitler and Mussolini by surprise, but the Yugoslav-Soviet treaty of friendship was an act of treachery. Hitler promised that Yugoslavia would be exterminated. On April 6, 1941 a combined force of Germans, Italians, Hungarians and Romanians ruthlessly attacked Yugoslavia, and in eleven days, on April 17th, the Yugoslav Armed Forces capitulated.<sup>2</sup> King Peter and his government had already gone into exile to London.<sup>3</sup>

After the so-called “April War”, Yugoslavia faced three fates--annexation, occupation, or in the case of Croatia, establishment of a semi-autonomous state. Most of the kingdom was annexed by adjacent nations.<sup>4</sup> The Germans annexed the northern part of Slovenia, while Italy took the southern portion of Slovenia, including Lubiana and Istria, and Dalmatia.<sup>5</sup> (Map 16). An “independent Croat nation” was further divided into German and Italian spheres of influence. The German military would have preferred outright occupation, but Hitler and his Foreign Minister, von Ribbentrop, saw some advantage in allowing Mussolini’s client, the Ustasha leader, Ante Pavelic, to become a puppet Fuhrer. As the war progressed, however, German influence in Croatia gradually assumed greater authority than the Italians, and after the Italian collapse of 1943, their control was absolute.<sup>6</sup>

### **Occupation**

Hitler was very interested in controlling a large part of Yugoslav territory, including those areas of Slovenia and Croatia which were rich in strategic materials and the major rail trunk lines which provided rapid communication with the Balkans. Hitler also wanted to annex into the Reich areas inhabited by Germans or those amenable to speedy Germanization.<sup>7</sup> The German racial theorist, Alfred Rosenberg, contended that some Slovenes were not Slovenes at all, but Wends, a highly Germanized type of Slav. For practical purposes they were treated as German citizens and were recruited into militia-like Wehrmannschaft (Reserves).<sup>8</sup>

For those not remotely German, Hitler intended to exterminate Slavic ethnic groups in order to implement his radical racial concept of Germanization. He declared initially that his objective was to populate the Slovene lands with people of “pure” German blood, to provide more Lebensraum. Therefore he began to cleanse the land of Slovenes through a planned system of mass deportation. On April 18, 1941, the Germans announced their plans. First, two hundred-sixty thousand Slovenes, or approximately forty per cent of the Slovene population under German occupation, were to be deported to Serbia or to Croatia for internment and second, about twenty to thirty thousand peasants were to be transported to Silesia (today’s southern Poland) to work the farms and mines.<sup>9</sup> While thousands were deported to Germany and Austria, many more fled to the Italian zone, where conditions were less rigorous.<sup>10</sup>

German plans of mass deportation of the Slovenes could not be implemented due to transport and to operational conditions. For those Slovenes who remained the Germans sought to deny them their rights as an ethnic group and subjected them to a brutal policy of Germanization. The use of the Slovene language was again banned in schools, and children were punished if they used their mother tongue. The Germans destroyed Slovene schools, tore down Slovene road signs and notices, changed place-names and even replaced epitaphs on gravestones.

For the Italians, the rapid victory led to Italian occupation of a broad band of Slovene and Croat, as well as Montenegrin, territory. Italy thus acquired not only all the lands once demanded by Italian irredentists, but extended her territory and influence beyond

any frontiers dreamed in the nineteenth century. The Adriatic Sea could now properly be called mar nostrum. Italian fascists proudly asserted that Italy now followed in the footsteps of her Roman ancestors in building an empire.<sup>11</sup> They considered Rome a superior civilization compared to the barbarian societies of the Slavs and communists.

The Italian military government, in order to pacify the newly absorbed parts of Slovenia, introduced the process of Italianization gradually, in contrast with the brutal enforcement that was exercised in Venezia-Giulia after World War I. Unlike the Germans in the north, the Italians recognized the existence of a separate Slovene ethnicity. Except in Venezia-Giulia, the Slovene language was given official status alongside Italian, and the University of Lubiana remained open. The Italian civilian authorities introduced signs in two languages everywhere, and permitted a Slovene press. The Italians also accepted the existence of Slovene and Croat schools and cultural organizations.<sup>12</sup> The Italians, however, did introduce a certain amount of economic exploitation, primarily by the establishment of state monopolies.<sup>13</sup> The occupying civil authority, the Commissariat, appointed fascist chiefs to govern local communities. Since the Church had great influence, particularly in the countryside, the Italians at first had little trouble with the population.<sup>14</sup>

### **Resistance**

The Axis occupation ultimately brought out both collaboration and resistance. Some groups were openly collaborationist.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Marko Natlachen, who had been Ban (Governor) of Dravska (Slovenia) before the occupation, organized a fascist militia, the Slovene Legion.

He saw himself as a patriot, realist and anti-communist.<sup>16</sup> In Croatia, the collaboration was even more extreme. Although the Ustashas had their own private agenda of exterminating as many Serbs as they could, they unwittingly became a pawn of the German racists.<sup>17</sup> The Ustashas planned to deal with their enemies in three ways: one third to be exterminated; one third to be deported, and one third to be converted to Catholicism. In the old military frontier districts, the Ustashas slaughtered thousands.<sup>18</sup> In the village of Glina, all male inhabitants were herded into the church, which was then burned down, while Ustashas waited to shoot anyone who tried to escape. Such atrocities shocked even the German officers who witnessed the act.<sup>19</sup> The Wehrmacht (German Army) was anxious to avoid trouble in the Balkans. They feared that Ustasha violence would provoke a reaction from the Serbs which might lead to civil war, requiring a greater presence of German forces to maintain supply lines. The Italians, however, continued their support of the Ustashas since they were suspicious of further German penetration into Croatia and Albania.

At the time of the invasion, some Yugoslav army officers managed to hide out and refused to surrender. Among them was a general staff colonel, Draza Mihailovic. He was well known abroad, having attended higher general staff schools in Paris, where he became friends with Charles de Gaulle. On May 13, 1941, he left with twenty-six men for the remote area of Ravna Gora to build an underground movement to restore the monarchy. Until Allied combat support became available, he saw no point in provoking the Germans to savage reprisals against the civilian population by acts of sabotage or by isolated attacks on Germans. This was also the view of the British government at the time.<sup>20</sup> In October 1941

the British government, on advice from the exiled royal government in London, decided to recognize Mihailovic as the leader of the Yugoslav resistance movement. He gave the name "Chetnik" to this organization.<sup>21</sup> Mihailovic established radio contact with the exile government in London and received the message in October 1941, "Except in case of dire necessity, do not provoke the enemy until the signal is given for joint effort."<sup>22</sup>

At first, Allied propaganda inflated the image of Mihailovic into that of a legendary hero. It seems probable that the knowledge that he had the backing of the Allies and of the exiled government stiffened Mihailovic in his rejection of early proposals for military cooperation with the Partisans. The British liaison officers, Major Duane (Bill) Hudson and Colonel S. W. Bailey, asked for reconciliation of differences between the two groups; however the root of the differences was more profound. The Chetniks were mainly Serb and Royalists, thus favoring centralist tendencies. The Partisans represented a broad cross-section of Yugoslav peoples who favored social reform and release from Serb hegemony.

Another resistance force in Slovenia was the combination of Liberals and Catholics, bitter enemies before the war, now united in an anti-communist Slovene Alliance.<sup>23</sup> There were also Slovene Chetniks, loosely attached to the Slovene Alliance, but they were considered as little or no threat to the Italians.<sup>24</sup> In fact the Italians attempted to exploit the Slovene Alliance and Chetnik anti-Communist feelings by organizing them into paramilitary "White Guards" to police the villages and "Blue Guards" to fight the Partisans. The Slovene

Chetniks were recruited from Yugoslav ex-officers who considered themselves to be acting on behalf of Mihailovic.<sup>25</sup>

The Yugoslav Partisans, the other major resistance group, for all practical purposes were under the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party (PCJ). In its early years, the Communist Party had operated underground with limited success since police harassment and internal quarrels reduced it to impotence.<sup>26</sup> The old guard expected the proletariat to overcome regional differences to become a national party. For them ethnic and linguistic differences among Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were irrelevant. They did not even consider Slovene as an independent language. This bias of the Communist Party toward centralization went in a different direction from the other opposition parties which demanded greater autonomy.<sup>27</sup>

In its resolution of March 1935, however, the party's central committee reversed its centralist position and called for the federalist approach. The party became increasingly aware that nationalism was dangerous, since it played into the hands of the pro-fascist groups in Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>28</sup> In 1937 the party formed regional communist parties in Croatia and Slovenia.

The return of Josip Broz, also known as Tito, in 1937 changed the destiny of the Yugoslav Communist Party. While in Moscow as a member of the Yugoslav Politburo, Tito worked for the Comintern and gained the confidence of Stalin.<sup>29</sup> At the end of 1937, while his compatriots in Moscow perished in Stalin's purges, Tito managed to survive and become First Secretary of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Tito was a perfect conspirator and

organizer. He set to work early in 1938 purging and reorganizing the Communist network throughout Yugoslavia and promoted his cohorts who were committed body and soul to the Soviet Union and to Stalin. Tito was very strongly influenced by Stalin's concept of a state that recognized regional cultural, historical and linguistic autonomy, yet one that retained a centralized political structure through the party.<sup>30</sup>

By late 1941 the Italians in occupied Slovenia encountered the first armed resistance, in the form of terrorist attacks by the Partisans. The Italian military countered with their own wave of terrorism, including the taking of hostages and the burning of villages. These harsh actions were to little avail. At the beginning of 1942, the situation for the Italian high command in the provincial capital of Lubiana was delicate and grave.<sup>31</sup> As Partisan terrorist activity against the Italians and native non-communists increased, the Governor, General Humberto Grazioli, initiated more severe measures and issued a proclamation promising that repression of the guerrillas would be applied "without pity" since the "behavior of the Partisans toward Italian prisoners and wounded soldiers was contrary to all recognized rules of warfare."<sup>32</sup> The Italian occupation propaganda machine exploited incidents committed by Partisans against the local population. In July 1942, the Italians attempted to wipe out the Partisans in Slovenia by launching an offensive of seven divisions against them. Although the Partisans suffered severely, they managed to escape destruction. Some Partisans crossed over the borders into Italy to the cities of Gorizia, Trieste, Pola and even to Udine to exploit anti-fascist sentiment there and conducted joint operations with Italian Partisans. By the



autumn of 1942, Slovene Partisans claimed that they had “liberated one-third of territory” of the province. In fact, they controlled only the hilly, forested areas. Towns and cities were still controlled by the Italians at a cost of the commitment of six divisions.

In the meantime, Partisan-Chetnik relations turned from bad to worse. At first, Mihailovic regarded the Partisans as dangerous fanatics, but assumed they were on the Yugoslav side.<sup>33</sup> Tito perceived that he had two enemies, the Germans and Italians, and the internal enemy, the anti-Communists, especially the Chetniks. The Chetniks, initially favored by the British, presented an obstacle for his future revolution.

For the most part, Mihailovic’s Chetniks avoided aggressive campaigns against the Germans, a policy in accordance with his instructions from London, and the belief that the Allies would invade the Istrian peninsula after the invasion of Italy. (See below). Mihailovic envisioned resistance in terms of setting up an organization which when the time was ripe would rise against the occupying forces. Such a time would come when Allied victory was assured and the liberation of Yugoslavia was imminent.<sup>34</sup>

Circumstances changed as the Allies wanted diversion of German and Italian forces from North Africa and from Sicily in late 1942. Mihailovic continued to restrain his actions and did not conduct major operations against the occupiers. Both of the British liaison officers, Major Hudson and Colonel Bailey, began criticizing the lack of activity. At the same time Tito was gaining prestige by his aggressive policy against the Germans and by favorable reports from his British liaison.<sup>35</sup> Gradually the Allies were fed information from the liaison

and from field intelligence quartered in Cairo that Mihailovic was doing little or nothing to fight the Germans; however, he was doing everything in his power to harass the Partisans.<sup>36</sup> As Allied operational requirements increased, the Allies altered their policy. In late 1942 the British encouraged more aggressive action through joint organization and cooperation of both groups.<sup>37</sup> Tito, encouraged by the shift in policy, tried a tactic to control the Chetniks by proposing immediate, unlimited operations against the Germans by united Partisans and Chetnik forces under a unified command. Tito offered Mihailovic membership in the Partisan High Command, and military leadership of a combined force. The catch lay in the subordination of the military commander to the High Command as a whole, which was controlled by Tito himself.<sup>38</sup> Mihailovic saw the trap and rejected it.

Tito and Mihailovic not only had different ideological and personal motivations, but the two leaders also had different management styles: Tito was a superb organizer while Mihailovic lacked that talent altogether; Tito enforced discipline, Mihailovic could not control his subordinates; Tito's policies were dynamic, Mihailovic's were basically static; Tito fought ruthlessly in pursuit of his ambitions, Mihailovic gambled all on his faith in an Allied victory while he and his followers sought to prevent the spread of the alien communist ideology.<sup>39</sup>

By early 1943, four Axis attacks pushed Tito's Partisans southward into Bosnia. The fifth Axis offensive, which lasted through May and June 1943, proved the Partisans' greatest military ordeal. Tito himself was wounded, but his forces succeeded in escaping into northeast Bosnia. The morale of the Partisans was unimpaired, however, and within the next

six months they recovered sufficiently to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by a sudden change in the fortunes of war--the capitulation of Fascist Italy.

### **The Fall of Fascism**

The Axis troops in north Africa surrendered on May 13, 1943 and on July 9th, Allied troops landed in Sicily meeting little resistance. This successful Allied invasion of Sicily and the threat of invasion of the mainland, made many influential Italians nervous. Ivanoe Bonomi, the former Prime Minister, visited the king on June 2, 1943 and pointed out that if the king dismissed Mussolini, which he had constitutional right to do, the Axis alliance would no longer be valid, since the Pact of Steel was between two regimes, not between the two nations.

On July 19, 1943 Hitler and Mussolini agreed that only drastic action could now save Italy. Hitler was determined to maintain Mussolini as the fascist figurehead. On July 24th, at Mussolini's call, the Fascist Grand Council met. The former fascist ras who had supported Mussolini in his rise to dictatorship, Dino Grandi, stated, "the real enemy of fascism is the dictatorship."<sup>40</sup> Mussolini seemed unable to defend himself. The Council voted nineteen to seven for Grandi's motion to dismiss Mussolini as its chief. The nervous Mussolini thought that he could convince Hitler to transfer troops to help defend his regime. It happened, however, that the king had prepared a plan to dismiss and to replace him with Marshal Pietro Badoglio. The next afternoon Mussolini visited the king and was not only dismissed, but arrested. With his arrest, Italian fascism began to dissolve.

Hitler could not accept the elimination of the sister fascist state. He therefore ordered the kidnapping of Mussolini from his internment and set up the neo-Fascist Republic of Salò, on the banks of Lake Garda.<sup>41</sup> German troops streamed across the Brenner Pass and reinforced occupied northern and central Italy, as well as Rome. Hitler annexed the Brenner-South Tyrol area and the city of Trieste.<sup>42</sup>

The Italian capitulation at the beginning of September 1943 was the signal for a race between the Germans and the Partisans to accept the surrender of the Italian troops and take over their military equipment in Slovenia, Dalmatia and Montenegro. On September 9, 1943, the German military forces seized the Italian headquarters at Lubiana.<sup>43</sup> The Germans interned as many of the Italian forces in the area as possible, but a few Italian soldiers managed to escape. Outside the cities, many simply laid down their arms and surrendered, or they were assaulted by both Partisans and Ustasas.<sup>44</sup> Large numbers of disillusioned Italian soldiers joined Partisan units (Garibaldi Brigades) as Tito's forces began to occupy Dalmatia and most of formerly Italian-held Slovenia.<sup>45</sup> The Italian surrender brought the collapse of both auxiliaries dependent on the Italians--the White and Blue Guards--as well as the demise of the Independent Croat State.<sup>46</sup>

The Germans successfully counterattacked the border areas taken up by the Partisans. Having regained these areas, the Germans established a Civil Commissariat with its seat in Trieste. Dr. Friedrich Rainer, the Gauleiter of Carinthia became the chief civil authority. Lower-level posts remained in the hands of loyal members of the local population. The

Commissariat named Bruno Coceani, a former fascist leader, as prefect (mayor) of Trieste. Coceani understood that the Germans would lose ultimately, and the real enemy after the war for Triestine Italians would be the Yugoslavs.

To enlist greater cooperation of the local population, the Germans exploited Italo-Slavic animosities.<sup>47</sup> They reversed their previous policy of ethnic suppression and recognized the existence and language rights of all ethnic groups.<sup>48</sup> In Gorizia, Slovene newspapers started publication, and Slovene elementary and secondary schools opened and Slovenes were allowed to take over local administration. Such actions did not happen in Trieste, however, because of the strong Italian majority and pro-Italian policies of the local government. Coceani refused all Slovene demands.<sup>49</sup>

### **Allied War Plans**

At Quebec in August 1943, President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke about the possibility of a diversionary landing in Istria. Churchill proposed a “right-handed” flanking movement against Germany by “inflicting a stab in the Adriatic armpit”<sup>50</sup> He justified the scheme on military grounds, but confirmed in his memoirs that another reason was the threat of rapid Russian encroachment into the Balkan Peninsula and the already dangerous spread of Soviet influence there. It was agreed at Quebec to keep open the “Istrian option”, but only to act on it if the current Allied offensive in Italy resulted in a significant German retreat. That offensive, however, became bogged down in the following weeks.

Churchill's Istrian diversion came up again in December 1943 when the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, envisioned that if he could get far enough north in Italy he could push northeast toward Austria. The American Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, instead advocated an advance west toward southern France. Either one of those movements would hold several German divisions. Roosevelt agreed with Churchill's idea that the introduction of small groups of commandos operating along the Adriatic coast had great possibilities as a diversionary action, but Marshall questioned whether operations in both France and Istria would be feasible since they might conflict with planned operations in Italy.<sup>51</sup> This issue again arose in June 1944. Field Marshal Harold Alexander's Allied armies had driven north of Rome toward the Gothic Line between Pisa and Rimini. The strategists had to decide whether to breach the Gothic Line with all available forces or to withdraw some troops for planned landings elsewhere. On June 14th the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to halt at the Gothic Line and to make three divisions available for landings in France.

While Mihailovic looked forward to an Istrian landing, Tito feared one. In 1944 Tito secretly visited Moscow where he repeated his intention of using force, if necessary, to prevent Allied intervention in Istria. The Partisans' dread of a landing was confirmed by Tito's Slovene deputy, Edvard Kardelj, who wrote in his reminiscences that Tito had suspected that western troops might invade Istria and occupy the Isonzo River valley in its advance toward Vienna, thus challenging Yugoslav claims to the territory.<sup>52</sup> Because of insufficient transport and logistics to support both the French and the Istrian landings,

Churchill finally had to drop the idea of a landing in Yugoslavia.<sup>53</sup> The dream of an Allied invasion that Mihailovic had long nurtured, faded (as did his fortunes).

The showdown for support of the Chetniks came in early 1944. Before leaving for the Teheran Conference, Churchill received exaggerated reports about Partisan strength and capabilities. These reports convinced Churchill that the Partisans had been the only resistance force seriously fighting the Germans, and that the Partisans enjoyed overwhelming support of the Yugoslav people.<sup>54</sup> Churchill decided that all guerrilla forces should unite against the Germans and that Tito's Partisans were best prepared to lead the joint effort. He asserted that a united Yugoslav front of both Partisan and Chetnik forces under aggressive leadership would give the royal Yugoslav government an opportunity to determine the future of Yugoslavia. At the same time Stalin urged the Yugoslav Communists to compromise with Britain and avoid anything that might alarm the Anglo-Americans into thinking that the Partisans had a revolutionary agenda.

Upon his return from Teheran, Churchill pressured King Peter to recognize a joint Partisan-Chetnik force under the king's direct command, even at the price of sacrificing Mihailovic himself. Accordingly, King Peter appointed the former Ban (Governor) of Croatia, Dr. Ivan Subasic, as his Prime Minister. Churchill hastened to secure the monarchy's position by sending his son, Randolph, to Partisan territory to persuade Tito to accept the proposal. Tito asked for a compromise in which the king could return to power, but not until after the war, and that a regency of Subasic in London and Tito in the field would govern in the interim. This compromise was accepted by Churchill.

From then on the Partisans, backed by the increasing weight of Allied support, gradually pushed the Germans back. In September 1944, the Red Army reached the Yugoslav border, and Tito was determined to meet Stalin to discuss the conditions for the passage of the Red Army before it entered the country. He secretly flew to Moscow where he reached an agreement which permitted the passage of Soviet troops through Yugoslav territory in return for Stalin's pledge that the Red Army would not interfere with the Yugoslav civil administration. The Red Army entered Yugoslavia on October 1st and on October 20th a joint Partisan-Red Army force entered Belgrade.<sup>55</sup>

### **Slovenia and Istria**

In Venezia-Giulia several resistance groups contended for power during the war: 1. the Slovene Partisans, also known as the Slovene Liberation Front, which consisted of Slovene Communists who sought some post-war regional autonomy within the Yugoslav state; 2. the Yugoslav Partisans, who operated under the general direction of Tito and the Yugoslav Communist Party (PCJ) who sought a unified Yugoslavia under the PCJ; 3. the Italian Communists in Venezia-Giulia, who tended to follow the better organized Slovene Partisans; 4. the Italian Communists (PCI) which directed most Italian Partisan activities, who sought a post-war left wing victory in Italian national politics; and 5. various non-Communist resistance groups.<sup>56</sup>

The two Communist parties (PCJ and PCI) contrasted most sharply in Venezia-Giulia, Friuli and Istria. Although urban workers were initially united in the socialist movement prior to World War I and subsequently united in the underground communist



movement during the thirties, each ethnic group formed its own small, but militant Slovene communist party (KPS and the local PCI). The two parties existed side-by-side, but separately. As the Second World War progressed and as the resistance grew stronger, the Yugoslav Partisans demonstrated a successful model for both Italian and Slovene resistance. In 1943, it was agreed that the Italians could form their own Partisan units and operate under Slovene Partisan command.

The Italians were able to organize armed resistance on a large scale only after the collapse of Mussolini's regime in the summer of 1943. The surrender of the Italians in September 1943, however, accentuated the differences in scale and competence of the rival forces. The surrendering Italian troops in Yugoslavia created a vacuum which the Yugoslav Partisans were quick to fill. The Partisans benefited by closer proximity to the rapidly disintegrating Italian forces. Within three weeks after the Italian surrender the Partisans could form large military formations of corps and divisions.

The Slovene Partisans had waged active guerrilla operations since the beginning of the war. They had the advantage of terrain. Slovenia was mainly rural and contained hills and forests which provided excellent cover for guerrilla bands. The chief elements of the resistance were communist Partisans, led by Edvard Kardelj and Boris Kidric. The other elements were left-wing members of the ethnic Sokols (recall that Sokols were cultural and gymnastic organizations disbanded by the Yugoslav dictatorship in the 1930s), some Christian Socialists, as well as some parish priests, and radically-minded writers and intellectuals.<sup>57</sup>

During the first year of Italian occupation (1941) the leaders of the traditional Slovene political parties did not join resistance movements. In fact, they condemned the Partisans' terrorist activities for provoking Italian reprisals. The Partisans answered with a series of terrorist attacks against well-known anti-communist figures. The conservative forces reacted violently against the Partisans and joined in open collaboration with the Italians. In a similar vein the Trieste Italian and Slovene Communists formed their own urban guerrillas, Gruppo di Azione Patriotica, which conducted terrorist operations against German and Italian garrisons and killed prominent anti-Communists. These actions provoked the occupation forces to inflict fierce reprisals on the general populace in both rural and urban areas, further alienating ordinary Italians and Slovenes. The Slovene Partisans at first had little success among the peasants. Nevertheless, the increased number and degree of reprisals by the occupying forces changed the normally conservative people's attitude. After a few months of propaganda, the Slovene Liberation Front, directed by the Partisans, had enough members to assemble its first small armed bands.<sup>58</sup>

The Italians who joined the Partisan movement in Venezia-Giulia came from the industrial centers along the coast (Trieste and Monfalcone) and from Friuli and Gorizia/Gradisca. In early 1943 the Italians and Slovenes discussed the possibility of uniting into a single military unit, to be called the Garibaldi detachment (later renamed the Garibaldi Brigade). The workers from Monfalcone, true to their traditional combativeness, mobilized spontaneously and fought alongside Slovene formations during the liberation of Gorizia in September 1943.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, the workers from the Trieste area had formed their

first proletarian brigade, later to be renamed the Triestina Brigade, which fought with the Slovene Partisans operating in Venezia-Giulia.<sup>60</sup> Soon after, there followed other Garibaldi Brigades, and finally the Garibaldi Division and the Natisone Division (named after the Natisone River Valley in Friuli), which operated in Friuli and Slovenia.<sup>61</sup> The Italian Socialists formed their own Osoppo Division, which also operated in Friuli.

Italian liberal-democrats of Venezia-Giulia who opposed both fascism and German occupation established their own political underground, the Committee for National Liberation (CLN), in Venezia-Giulia, Friuli and in Trieste. Although it did agree to cooperate with the Slovene Liberation Front, the CLN was very much concerned about keeping its identity as Italian. The CLN objected to the ethnic principle of self-determination for the drawing of borders. It did not recognize the Slavs' right to annex all territories compactly settled by Slavs and it made it clear that the entire Venezia-Giulia area should remain united with Italy.<sup>62</sup>

The local PCI leader in Trieste, Luigi Frausin, tended to support the CLN position, but after his arrest the local Slovene Communist Party (KPS) sought an Italian Communist representative who would cooperate more closely with them.<sup>63</sup> Obliging Frausin's successor demanded that the CLN agree to unification of Venezia-Giulia with the new democratic Yugoslavia. The CLN rejected this condition, and as a result the Italian Communists abandoned cooperation with the CLN. Thereafter, the CLN took a strong position, stating that the Italian democratic parties would defend the old Italian frontier; however, they promised cultural autonomy for the Slovene and Croat minorities.<sup>64</sup>

Yugoslav aid was of critical importance in the creation of the Italian resistance units, and cooperation between Italian and Yugoslav Partisans was common at first. As soon as substantial Italian Partisan formations emerged, conflict and misunderstandings between the two groups began to appear. The Yugoslav Partisan commands wanted to maintain control. To assert its control, the Trieste PCI pulled an Italian Partisan battalion away from a Croat division control in Istria and moved it into the city to support a strike in the shipyards.<sup>65</sup> PCI-KPS relations in Friuli and Venezia-Giulia proved even more difficult, in part because the Italian formations in the area were relatively strong. In early 1944, the Slovene Partisans asked that Italian units move to the west of the Tagliamento River (Map 16) leaving the area to the east (including Gorizia, Udine, and Trieste) to Slovene control. The Italians refused; they knew that the area figured prominently in Slovene territorial aspirations. The Yugoslavs moderated their territorial demands, but they increased Slovene nationalist propaganda to such an extent that Italian Communist Partisans again protested in August 1944. Across the border in Slovene operational zones Slovene commanders sought to discourage Italian recruitment. The KPS political commissar ordered the Italians to release all the Slavs from the Garibaldi and Natisone Divisions and to expel "types who had stained themselves with Fascist cruelty against the Slovene nation."<sup>66</sup> Many recent Italian recruits were transferred to the interior of Slovenia where they were used only as labor forces rather than as combatants. The Italian Partisan Natisone Division most consistently opposed Yugoslav efforts to establish hegemony over them. In March 1945, its leaders attempted to ensure that Italian units would

participate in the liberation of Trieste and Gorizia, but by April, the Yugoslav Partisans moved the division far from Trieste, to liberate Lubiana. The rivalry among Italian, Slovene and Yugoslav communists made a mockery of Marxist internationalism. Each party had their own nationalist aspirations.

In Trieste by August 1944, the KPS established a strong base of Italo-Slovene workers' organizations, and succeeded in mass mobilization of the workers. The KPS galvanized worker committees to call for the annexation of Trieste to Yugoslavia. The national PCI argued that such calls would make the Italian population unlikely to support the Yugoslav movement, and that it would compromise efforts to create an anti-Nazi front. Francesco Leone of the PCI reached an agreement with the KPS which declared that it was impossible to discuss the border issues at that time, but both Italian and Yugoslav national rights were to be recognized.<sup>67</sup> Later, in August of 1944, Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the national PCI pulled a svolta (about-face). He claimed that the Italian liberation movement in Friuli and Venezia-Giulia was strengthened by the presence of Yugoslav Partisans.<sup>68</sup> Later that month Luigi Longo, one of the top national leaders of the PCI, stated that the Slovene Communists could mobilize the population of Venezia-Giulia in upholding its right to form an independent state federated with other Slavic states. The PCI would concentrate on the elimination of fascism in Friuli and in the Veneto.

During the final months of the war in early 1945, however, the PCI was no longer so anxious to leave Trieste to Yugoslavia. The pragmatic Togliatti, seeing an opportunity to form a coalition with the left wing Socialists and Social Democrats in a future post-war

government, understood the strong Italian sentiment for Trieste, and recalled that exasperated Italian nationalism over terra irredenta and the rise of extreme right wing of fascism had been closely linked in 1919. The local Triestine Communist newspaper, Rinascita, published the PCI's programmatic statement on Trieste. According to this statement, nationalism on both sides would perpetuate discord and present no economic advantages, for the city's economic hinterland lay not in Yugoslavia, but in Central Europe. The PCI argued for wide autonomy for the enlarged province of Venezia-Giulia, which included Fiume.<sup>69</sup> By the spring of 1945, the PCI had become less willing to follow the PCJ's lead. The PCI would not stand for Yugoslav annexation.

### **The Allied Military Government**

From 1942 on, the allies developed plans for military occupation and transition after hostilities. Although the British view of Yugoslavia was often ambivalent, Churchill realized that Britain would have to accommodate itself to a significantly altered postwar balance of power. In October 1944 Churchill and Stalin concluded their famous fifty-fifty sphere of influence agreement. This agreement conceded to the British an equal share of influence in Yugoslavia, thereby enhancing British aspirations in the Balkans. This action, however, ran counter to the American position which rejected the setting up of spheres of influence. Friction between Britain and the United States had long been evident and reflected differing assumptions about the desired character of the postwar world. Hoping to ensure renewed influence in the Mediterranean after the war, the British sought to treat

Italy as a vanquished nation as long as possible, using the monarch to realign domestic political life along conservative lines. The United States was interested primarily in the rapid democratic rehabilitation of Italy as a viable partner in a new liberal world order.<sup>70</sup>

This general disparity in British and American policies was reflected in their respective approaches to Venezia-Giulia. The Americans still intended to establish an Allied Military Government (AMG) in Venezia-Giulia for the short term. By contrast, the British now considered a local compromise with Tito that would square with the sphere of influence agreements reached in Moscow. Given that the Partisans were already operating in Istria, the Combined Chiefs of Staff feared that Tito's men might succeed in establishing control in Venezia-Giulia. In October 1944 the staff advised that it would eventually be necessary to reach some agreement with Marshal Tito about the establishment of the AMG. Their view was reinforced by reports from Allied field missions with Tito's Partisans in Slovenia and Venezia-Giulia that the Yugoslavs intended to seize the area and that the Partisans were increasingly hostile toward Britain and the United States.<sup>71</sup>

When the Allied Commander for the Mediterranean, Field Marshal Alexander, went to Belgrade in February 1945, he offered to provide Allied troops to accelerate the German retreat from Yugoslavia, but Tito adamantly refused. Alexander also told Tito that it would be necessary to establish AMG control throughout Venezia-Giulia to protect the lines of communication between Trieste and Austria. He stated the AMG would exercise control of the area within the 1939 frontiers and explained that this action would not prejudice boundary considerations in the final peace settlement.<sup>72</sup> The Yugoslav leader accepted the AMG, where

necessary for operational purposes, but only if Yugoslav civil administration already established by his Partisans was recognized.

In early 1945 British Foreign Secretary, Sir Anthony Eden, accommodated Tito's caveats and formally proposed at Yalta a demarcation line that satisfied Allied military requirements by leaving Trieste and the lines of communication to Austria under AMG control, while assigning the rest of the region to Yugoslav military administration. Churchill disagreed with this proposal for he had given up hope of retaining British influence over Tito and saw no reason to accommodate the Yugoslavs. In a letter to Eden on March 11, 1945 he wrote, "My feeling is that henceforth our inclination should be to back Italy against Tito.---I have lost my relish for Yugoslavia---On the other hand, I hope we may still save Italy from the Bolshevik pestilence."<sup>73</sup> A few days later the Prime Minister proposed to his Cabinet that he would inform Roosevelt that the British were disposed towards Italy in the northern Adriatic. Eden sought to persuade Churchill that Britain might still be able to influence the Yugoslav situation and should not write off Tito. Such action would cause anti-British feeling among the Slavs and would force Tito to depend upon the Russians.

Franklin D. Roosevelt displayed little interest in Italio-Yugoslav border issues as he was most concerned with the defeat of Germany. Roosevelt died in March 1945, and Harry S. Truman became president of the United States. The State Department reported to President Truman that Venezia-Giulia was one of its gravest concerns, aside from Italy's economic distress, and that it was necessary to forestall Yugoslav occupation of an important



part of northeastern Italy. Truman treated the issue cautiously, but was eventually convinced that the United States should at least prevent Yugoslav control of Trieste.<sup>74</sup>

By March of 1945, Tito had concluded that the Anglo-Americans would not sanction Yugoslav occupation of the disputed territories, especially the predominantly Italian localities. Yet the Yugoslavs were convinced that they could best assure postwar possession by preemptive armed occupation. Tito needed to prepare for this occupation through Yugoslav operational control of the Italian resistance movement in northeastern Italy. This objective was partially attained when Italian Partisan divisions came under the command of Tito's corps in Friuli and parts of Venezia-Giulia. The other element of Tito's strategy was to postpone the liberation of other parts of Yugoslavia, i.e. Lubiana, in order to capture the disputed territories and present the British and Americans with a fait accompli. On March 1945, the Yugoslav Fourth Army began an offensive drive from Dalmatia. Its ultimate objective was Trieste.<sup>75</sup> By April 1945 Fiume and most of Istria had been "liberated" and the German garrison in Trieste was surrounded. Despite the meetings between Tito and Field Marshal Alexander in February, the interested parties misunderstood the status of Venezia-Giulia upon liberation. The Yugoslavs expected to occupy the whole area, including Trieste. The Italians hoped that they could retain the 1939 frontiers, but the Anglo-Americans were mainly interested in the immediate military situation.<sup>76</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 567.
- <sup>2</sup> Frank P. Verna, "Yugoslavia Under Italian Rule, 1941-1943: Civil and Military aspects of the Italian Occupation", Diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1985, 27.
- <sup>3</sup> Pavlowitch, The Improbable Survivor, 8.
- <sup>4</sup> Hungary and Romania as members of the Axis also gained land by annexation.
- <sup>5</sup> Verna, "Yugoslavia Under Italian Rule, 92. The partition of Slovenia destroyed the unity of the region and tilted the geographic and economic advantages of the area decidedly in Germany's favor. Thus the mineral hydroelectric stations of the north passed to Germany, while Italy acquired the prevalently agricultural and forested area to the south.
- <sup>6</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 176.
- <sup>7</sup> Verna, "Yugoslavia under Italian Rule", 71.
- <sup>8</sup> Lucien Karchmar, Draza Mihailovic and the Rise of the Chetnik Movement, 1941-1942, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1987), 44.
- <sup>9</sup> Novak, Trieste, 51.
- <sup>10</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 185.
- <sup>11</sup> Novak, Trieste, 47.
- <sup>12</sup> Eric. R. Terzuolo, Red Adriatic: The Communist Parties of Italy and Yugoslavia, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 4.
- <sup>13</sup> Karchmar, Draza Mihailovic and the Rise of the Chetnik Movement, 47.
- <sup>14</sup> There were some Slovene collaborators from the pre-war Slovene People's Party, the right-wing clerical party led by Monsignor Korosec. In addition there were several royalists who stayed behind, prepared to collaborate with the Italians. They were sustained by Bishop Rotzman of Lubiana and lay members of Catholic Action.
- <sup>15</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 288.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid, 186.
- <sup>17</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 577.

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<sup>18</sup> No one knows the exact number of Serbs who died at the hands of the Ustasha. Numbers range from a thousand to tens of thousands.

<sup>19</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples, 177.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>21</sup> In the 1930's the Chetniks under Kosta Pechanac became a chauvinistic organization which terrorized the non-Serb population. The name Chetnik, although tarnished by intrigues and corruption still had an appeal to the Serb peasantry. Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 585.

<sup>22</sup> Actually, Mihailovic had no radio communication with London, He had to relay messages through the British stationed at Cairo.

<sup>23</sup> Novak, Trieste, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Teodoro Sala, "Gorizia, 1942: Il Secondo Fronte Partigiano al Confine orientale nelle relazione di polizia e dei commandi military Italiani", Movimento di liberazione in Italia, Vol. 225 (1973) 42.

<sup>25</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 220.

<sup>26</sup> Singleton, A Short History of the Yugoslav People, 148.

<sup>27</sup> Pavlowitch, The Improbable Survivor 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>29</sup> The Politburo was the major policy making entity of the Communist Party. Comintern was an acronym for the Communist International, the agency whose mission was fostering the conditions for world revolution.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>31</sup> Sala, "Gorizia, 1942" 41.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 51. The areas where the Axis were vulnerable were never controlled by the Partisans. The Germans left only four divisions in the theater to relieve pressure on the eastern front. (James Schulmaker, "German Occupation of Yugoslavia", Military Review, Vol. 46, No. 3 (March 1992), 48.

<sup>33</sup> Tito had already planned to eliminate Mihailovic. By 1944, he was abandoned by Allies; by 1945 he was captured by the Partisans, sentenced as a traitor, and executed.

<sup>34</sup> Walter R. Roberts, Tito, Mihailovic' and the Allies, 1941-1945, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1977), 26.

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<sup>35</sup> Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean, a personal, but impressionable, friend of Churchill, became senior liaison to the Partisans in 1943.

<sup>36</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 223.

<sup>37</sup> Roberts, Tito, Mihailovic' and the Allies, 27.

<sup>38</sup> Karchmar, Draza Mihailovic and the Rise of the Chetnik Movement, 207.

<sup>39</sup> The Chetniks had many sympathizers in Trieste, especially among the middle class and intellectuals. These sympathizers preferred the royal underground and the royalty. Since some Italian commanders saw the Ustasha atrocities against the Chetniks, they tended to protect fleeing Chetniks and refused to act against them. This protection was perceived by some as Chetnik collaboration with the Italians, and ultimately, helped cost the Chetniks the support of the British. (*Ibid.* 29).

<sup>40</sup> Wiskemann, Fascism in Italy, 85

<sup>41</sup> Mussolini decided to execute those who voted for Grandi's motion, including his son-in-law Ciano, despite the pleadings of his daughter.

<sup>42</sup> When the Partisans entered Milan and northern Italy in April 1945, Mussolini, not reaching the Alpine Redoubt, was captured and, by order of the committee of National Liberation for Upper Italy, was executed along with his mistress. (Clark, Modern Italy, section 15.3).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* section 15.1

<sup>44</sup> Verna, "Yugoslavia Under Italian Rule", 507.

<sup>45</sup> Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia, 653.

<sup>46</sup> Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia, 226.

<sup>47</sup> The strained and violent political climate between the repressive Italian state apparatus and the Slovene minority grew and developed into open conflict in Venezia-Giulia. This social tension gave rise to a politically radical opposition within the communist element.

<sup>48</sup> Novak, Trieste, 73.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 88.

<sup>50</sup> Roberto Giorgio Rabel, Between East and West: Trieste, the United States and the Cold War, 1941-1954, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Roberts, Tito, Mihailovic' and the Allies, 168.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 234-240.

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<sup>53</sup> Harold Macmillan, wrote in his post-war memoirs, that it was his opinion that if the Allies had been permitted to make a landing in Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia would have remained a monarchy.

<sup>54</sup> Nora Beloff and other authors allege that British Intelligence in Cairo had a number of Communist sympathizers and agents who promoted Tito's cause. (Nora Beloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia and the West: 1939-1954*, [London: Victor Gollancz, 1985], 44).

<sup>55</sup> Some of the military aspects of Tito's war leadership now appear dubious, but he had the ability always to recover quickly. He was astute, gaining control of the administration, the military, then liquidation of all political opponents. "Whatever the range of his formal military knowledge, he (Tito) had no talent as a military leader. He was often times rash and nervous. He had an overwhelming concern for his personal safety; he issued contradictory orders. His confusion and contradiction and vanity and conceit became secondary and were overlooked in a leader who confidently led his people to victory and to a new realm of brotherhood and freedom. His weaknesses and errors will not be remembered, while the glory of victory seems as assured as it was early on." (Milovan Djilas, *Tito: The Story from Inside*, Trans by V. Kojic and Richard Hayes, [London: Widenfeld & Nicolson, 1981], 205.)

<sup>56</sup> The Nationalist Actionists, made up of Republicans, Socialists and Liberals, and the Christian-Democratic Party led by A. De Gasperi, who established "Green Flame" units for non-Communist guerrilla units.

<sup>57</sup> The Slovene poet, Edvard Kocbek, a participant in the war, posed in his novel *Fear and Courage*, questions about humanity that had to be faced. His writings affirmed Marxist idealism, but he was a spiritual, humanitarian who believed that a Kingdom of God on earth could be achieved. He condemned the alliance between church and middle class for their spiritual failures. He sought a higher humanity through secular Marxism. In March 1945 when Tito formed his first government, Kocbek became the minister for Slovenia, but he saw the triumph of communist liberation subdued by Stalinism.

<sup>58</sup> Novak, *Trieste*, 53-55.

<sup>59</sup> Terzuolo, *Red Adriatic*, 29.

<sup>60</sup> Novak, *Trieste*, 110.

<sup>61</sup> The author interviewed two former Italian Partisans from Monfalcone who joined the Yugoslav Partisans. Although their parents were Slovene and Italian, the two brothers, Mario and Dereno Ostrovska, considered themselves Italian. Communist in orientation and politics as workers in the ship-building yards, they fought for liberation in Yugoslavia, but returned to Monfalcone after the war. They chose not to remain in Yugoslavia because of Slovene prejudice against "Italians". Mario and Dereno Ostrovska, interviewed by author June 1980, February 1985 and 1989.

<sup>62</sup> Novak, *Trieste*, 116.

<sup>63</sup> In late August 1944, the PCI leader in Trieste, Frausin, was compromised, possibly by a Slovene Communist traitor.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>65</sup> Terzuolo, Red Adriatic, 31.

<sup>66</sup> Relations between the Garibaldi and the Osoppo Divisions were never easy. The Osoppo tended to avoid costly initiatives that could bring reprisals against the civilian population. Influenced by the Catholics of Friuli, the Osoppo encouraged a certain anti-Communism and mistrust of the Slavs. In fact by the beginning of 1945 the Osoppo came to view both the Garibaldi Communists and the Slovene Partisans as adversaries. (Ibid. 32)

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 37

<sup>68</sup> Italian Partisans could come under Yugoslav control, as long as they retained their national identity.

<sup>69</sup> Eric Terzuolo, "Nationalism and Communist Resistance", Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism, Vol. 12 Annual (1985), 28.

<sup>70</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 32-35.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>72</sup> Roberts, Tito, Milailovic, and the Allies, 315.

<sup>73</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 40.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 39-42.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 27.

## CHAPTER 6

## THE TRIESTE QUESTION

Near the end of the war Trieste emerged as one of the most contentious issues facing the former Allies. The Yugoslavs desired to retain Trieste and Venezia-Giulia which had been “liberated” by their forces. The Anglo-Americans wished to establish an interim Allied Military Government in the disputed area to aid in maintaining lines of communications required to pursue retreating German forces. The British and Americans also sought to prevent further Communist encroachment to the west. The interim administration lasted for more than nine years. The original misunderstanding and conflict between Allied and Yugoslav goals remained unresolved. The Trieste question became not just a border issue, but it became a pawn in the greater game of the Cold War.

When Field Marshal Alexander met Tito in Belgrade in February 1945, the question of the administration of Venezia-Giulia had become urgent, yet no clear agreement appeared to have been reached. Tito assumed that the Allies would accept a fait accompli and that Alexander was interested only in safeguarding his supply lines from Trieste northwards to Tarvisio and southern Austria. He offered the use of the port at Trieste and even the use of the Sudbahn rail line via Lubiana. It seemed that control of Trieste would rest with whomever got there first.<sup>1</sup>

By April 27, 1945 Tito’s forces were twenty-five miles from Trieste while the closest British or American troops were in the vicinity of Venice, one-hundred-twenty miles away.

A race for Trieste was about to begin. During the next week military developments in Italy moved at lightning speed. Occupation plans could no longer be discussed at leisure. As the Yugoslavs neared Trieste, Anglo-American policy makers had to confront directly the unresolved question of how to handle Yugoslav resistance to the AMG in Venezia-Giulia. The areas of Trieste, Pola, and the lines of communication to Austria were critical. The rest of Venezia-Giulia could be left to the Yugoslavs. Churchill cabled Truman that Alexander should be ordered to make a dash for Trieste: "The late president always attached great importance to Trieste, ---the great thing is to be there before Tito's guerrillas are in occupation."<sup>2</sup>

Near the end of April 1945, when the evidence began to mount that the war in Europe was almost over, seven distinct groups in Trieste carefully watched events, preparing for the day and adopting positions to best achieve their goals. The contenders were: 1. the Republican Fascists, those few former fascists (numbering about 15,000) in Trieste supported the Prefect (Mayor) Coceani; 2. the Comitato di Liberazione (CLN), those anti-Communist groups of Liberals, Socialists and Italian Nationalists (numbering about 25,000), who along with Coceani supported the Italian irredentist tradition; 3. Tito's Partisans organized in large military fronts (over 300,000 in numbers, but only 75,000 in combat formations, converging on Istria and Trieste), under the Yugoslav Communist Party's (PCJ) centralized control; 4. the Italian Communists in the city of Trieste (mainly 15,000 industrial workers), unified with the Slovene Communists in favor of Yugoslav annexation of Venezia-Giulia; 5. the national Italian Communist Party (PCI), limited in numbers in Venezia-Giulia, but strong



throughout the entire peninsula (the PCI initially followed an internationalist agenda but it increasingly became nationalist in orientation since such a position favored the party in national politics); 6. the anti-Communist Slovenes, small in number, but composed of influential intellectuals; and 7. the Slovene Communists (also called the Slovenian Liberation Front) who desired annexation of Venezia-Giulia by Yugoslavia, but under regional autonomy.<sup>3</sup> Despite internal differences, all Italian groups, except the local communists, conceded their first duty to be defense of Italy's eastern border against Slavic occupation. Against this bloc was arrayed the Slovene Liberation Front, with the local Italian Communists and the Yugoslav Partisans, whose main objective was to annex Trieste and the whole of Venezia-Giulia to the new communist Yugoslavia.

The fascist administrators in occupied Yugoslavia had already retreated with German SS-Waffen and police forces beyond the Isonzo River. Some fascists remained and turned their weapons over to the CLN. Coceani spoke of the glorious Italian irredentist tradition, "Today, when once more they [Slovenes] try to impair our nationality, we must be one single idea, one single soul, an Italian bloc." Coceani considered local attacks against the Germans in Trieste would play into the hands of the Slavs. He sought to bargain with the Germans so that if the Germans turned over control to the CLN, the Italians could prevent damage to the port and city and join to forestall Yugoslav occupation.<sup>4</sup> Events did not proceed successfully in this way, however. There were clashes between Germans and Triestines. On April 27 SS-Waffen General Wilhelm Schaffer, informed the Italians he was instituting strict laws against unauthorized public assemblies and that he intended to defend the city to the last.

Meanwhile, the Yugoslav Partisan chiefs seeking cooperation from the CLN asked the CLN leaders what they wanted in exchange. The CLN replied that Venezia-Giulia, including Fiume and the islands, should be administered jointly by both Slavs and Italians. Pending acceptance, the CLN agreed to postpone its planned insurrection, but no agreement was reached nor did it appear that any agreement would come about. The CLN decided to begin its own uprising in the last days of April. The plans were doomed.<sup>5</sup> A German-Croat flotilla rushed to support the German forces, and the CLN found itself fighting along with local Partisans. The CLN began the uprising but could not master the entire city. It dominated only the very center while Yugoslav troops took up positions in the suburbs.<sup>6</sup>

The strength of the pro-Communists in Trieste lay in the Slovene Liberation Front and Unita' Operaia, the syndicate of industrial unions. The first represented the Slovenes living in Trieste's suburbs, and the second represented the laborers in the factories of Trieste, both Slovene and Italian. The Slovene communists convinced the workers that the new Yugoslavia would be a workers' state, while Italy would probably remain capitalistic, controlled by the Western powers. The Trieste Italian workers responded positively to these arguments, since they had, in fact, never been comfortable with Italy. After the First World War the fascists began to harass them and suppressed the socialist and communist movements.<sup>7</sup> Despite the promise of prosperity under Italian control, industry and commerce in the city declined in part due to loss of trade with central Europe and in part to Italian favoritism toward other ports.

On April 29 and 30, the Yugoslav forces tried hard to break through the outer defenses of Trieste. By the evening of April 30, they penetrated the German positions and entered the first suburban villages. About 9:30, the next morning, May 1, the first armed Yugoslav units reached the city center. A few Chetniks, operating in the area, and the Slovene National Guard retreated toward the west, crossing the Isonzo on April 29. Here they surrendered to the British Eighth Army.<sup>8</sup> Many members of the Blue and White Guard, however, were taken prisoners by Tito's troops and the majority were put to death.<sup>9</sup>

The Partisans arrived in Trieste on the first of May, while elements of the Second New Zealand Division of the British Eighth Army crossed the Isonzo. Overcoming scattered German resistance, the New Zealanders encountered Yugoslav Partisan forces in Monfalcone, about twelve miles from Trieste. Surprised by the rapidity of the final Anglo-American advance, Yugoslav field officers sought to delay the New Zealand force in Monfalcone. The New Zealand commander, General Bernard Freyberg, knew that the battle for Trieste was not over and ordered his division to resume its advance toward that city as stipulated in Alexander's instructions. The New Zealanders soon encountered overt Yugoslav hostility. General Freyberg found himself confronted with a menacing demand from the chief of staff of the Fourth Yugoslav Army, General Pavle Jaksic: "We request Allied troops immediately to withdraw to the west bank of the Isonzo and that Allied Military authorities do not mix in our internal affairs..."<sup>10</sup> Prudently, Freyberg sought further instructions from his superiors in Naples. Freyberg asked to meet the Yugoslav Ninth Corps commander, but the Yugoslav failed to appear, so Freyberg ordered his troops to proceed to

Trieste. Soon thereafter the Yugoslav commander arrived and Freyberg explained that his orders were to press on to Trieste and open the port as a base for the British armies and his New Zealanders were already on the march. The German garrison resisted vigorously and the fighting did not end until May 2 when the New Zealanders entered the city. As a result, some of the Germans surrendered to Yugoslavs while others gave themselves up to New Zealanders.

On a higher level, on May 3, Alexander received a message from Tito protesting that: "Allied Forces, which are under your command, without any previous notice have entered Trieste, Gorizia and Monfalcone, the cities which have been liberated by the Yugoslav Army".<sup>11</sup> Alexander smoothly replied that the overlapping of zones need not cause serious difficulties and restated his intention to establish the necessary organization in Trieste and elsewhere in the AMG area to ensure that his line of communication be brought into operation rapidly.<sup>12</sup> The "race" for Trieste ended somewhat ambiguously.

### **The Forty Days**

When dawn broke on May 3, 1945, Trieste found itself under an uneasy dual occupation. The fortunes of war had brought two very different liberating armies to the area at the same time. Each force had been charged by its superiors with the responsibility of establishing a military government. Not surprisingly, relations were tense and confused. Partly as a consequence of ambiguous and poorly integrated Anglo-American wartime policies on Venezia-Giulia, it now became a matter of direct political-military confrontation. The Yugoslavs had ethnic claims to the Istrian peninsula, which they asserted

had been unfairly restored to Italy at the end of the First World War. The Italians, especially those living in the urban areas insisted on Italian retention of the area. Such opposing views were reflected by their responses to newly arrived Anglo-American forces.

Major Geoffrey Cox was intelligence officer with the New Zealand Division which entered Trieste in 1945. His impressions were that the Italians along the way from Venice to Monfalcone were friendly, but upon reaching Monfalcone, there were many Yugoslav Partisans, unfriendly and even hostile to the Westerners.<sup>13</sup> He sensed a distrust and suspicion which would dominate the Cold War years. He wrote,

“Then, swiftly, we entered what the drivers rapidly enough called ‘Titoland’. There were Partisans everywhere---Suddenly we were at the Isonzo, and twenty minutes later we entered the outskirts of Monfalcone. By the roadside they were posting up portraits of Tito, and writing ‘zivio (viva) Tito’ and ‘zivio Stalin’.”<sup>14</sup>

Monfalcone had been liberated from Nazi occupation by the Partisans who also had already installed a Slovene mayor under the auspices of a local Committee of Liberation. Yet, as Cox passed down the road to Trieste, he witnessed other signs in Italian, “Viva Churchill” and “Viva Gli Alleati” and a more friendly atmosphere. He had crossed a “No-Man’s Land”.<sup>15</sup>

On the morning of May 3, Yugoslav General Josip Cerni assumed the position of military commander of Trieste, charged with the responsibility of organizing the military administration. One of his first acts was to issue a decree informing the public that the Yugoslav army had taken over administration of Trieste. While celebrating the fruits of victory, however, the newly arrived Yugoslavs became disorderly, threatening Italians.

Italian businessmen, clerics and former civil authorities were arrested. Summary arrests were carried out and people removed from the city without trial. The Yugoslavs' next move would have been their most important, had it been successful. They again tried to get the Allied troops out of Venezia-Giulia. The Yugoslav Nineteenth Corps commander, General Peter Drapsin, demanded that all Allied liaison officers and military missions be immediately withdrawn or "drastic action would be taken".<sup>16</sup> Freyberg informed Drapsin that the question of the garrison of Trieste was being discussed between Alexander and Tito, and that the British would ensure that no trouble broke out from their side. General Drapsin backed down from his threat and proceeded to visit General John Harding, Commander of the Thirteenth British Corps, on May 5, and the two agreed that Allied forces could remain in Trieste and along the roads connecting Trieste with Austria via Monfalcone and Gorizia. This agreement remained in force for five weeks while negotiations were held on higher levels. During this time an American and a British division joined the New Zealanders in securing the roads.<sup>17</sup>

Within a few days two headquarters had been set up, one by the Allied Military Government at the docks and railheads, and the other, by the Yugoslav Army in the administration of the city.<sup>18</sup> On May 5, the Yugoslavs assumed civil power in Trieste, installing a Croat Mayor who did not speak Slovene. Clocks in Trieste were advanced one hour to match the time in Belgrade, a curfew was imposed, and all unauthorized public assemblies were outlawed.<sup>19</sup>

Many Italians feared for their future rights and citizenship. Except for a few workers, Italians did not participate in legal organized demonstrations in support of the Partisans. The shopkeepers, intellectuals, teachers, professors, engineers, and middle-class in general favored annexation by Italy. Particularly disillusioned were members of the Italian Communist Party of Trieste, since they had cooperated significantly with the Yugoslavs in securing control of the city from the Germans and they now found themselves ignored. The urbanized Italian Communists witnessed their city “invaded by people from the hills” (the country people or, plainly speaking, the Slav peasants). On May 7, the Yugoslavs created the Consiglio di Liberazione di Trieste (Council for the Liberation of Trieste-CLT), which gave the Slovene Communist Party full administrative control over the Communist movement in Trieste.

After taking Trieste, the Partisans continued to “liberate” the rest of Slovenia. The Slovene non-communists organized a ‘Slovene Alliance’ in Lubiana on May 3, 1945. The Alliance called a meeting of former Slovene deputies to the prewar Belgrade Parliament as well as cultural and economic leaders to form an underground Slovene parliament and to proclaim a United Slovenia, which would be a member of a federated Yugoslavia with King Peter as ruler. Before they could implement their plans, Partisan forces had encircled the city. The Alliance members along with other non-communist resistance fighters managed to escape to the north and surrendered to the British. The British held them in detention briefly, but then turned them over to the new Yugoslav rulers, who massacred them in the Kocevje Forest of Slovenia.<sup>20</sup>

At the war's end there was much tension between Italians and Slavs. In Trieste, hatred was fueled by the ideological division of the population into communists and anti-communists, and by the history of Italian Fascist policy against Slovenes. During this time many non-communist Italians disappeared as a result of long-built up acrimony and hatred against the fascists. It was alleged that those who had disappeared had been buried in foibe (deep holes or caverns in the limestone shield of the Carso). An Allied Committee investigating complaints in late 1945 found that there was evidence that many persons were indeed thrown into the foibe. An independent study conducted in 1995 revealed that over five thousand police, former fascists, soldiers and collaborators disappeared without a trace.<sup>21</sup> The Slavs of Venezia-Giulia could not forget the harsh realities of the Italian Fascist regime which had ruled for more than two decades and had maintained an attitude of racial and cultural superiority against Slavs.

As stated above, the communist dominated CLT had assumed civil authority in Trieste. The communist controlled unions and Slovene Liberation Front called public electoral meetings which resulted in the election of an assembly with eighty-two Italians and thirty-seven Slovenes, mostly selected by the CLT. The assembly elected a Liberation Council which would assume the role as executive to the assembly. The new Liberation Council consisted of eighteen members, eleven Italians and seven Slovenes, all born or resident in Trieste.<sup>22</sup> Only four percent of the population participated in the election process with no secret ballot.<sup>23</sup>



The people's courts, militia and unions provided the usual Communist tools to keep the people under control. The Special People's Court condemned fascists and their collaborators to death and imprisonment. To help detect former fascists, the branches of the labor unions organized purging commissions. Anyone seeking employment had to belong to the union. Persons known for anti-communist sentiments in the past were denied membership and could not get employment.<sup>24</sup> What happened in Trieste and in the rest of Venezia-Giulia was an integral part of Yugoslav events. It was a successful conclusion to a communist revolution. Those who did not collaborate with the communists and opposed their takeover were regarded as enemies. Italians, Slovenes and Croats who opposed communist rule for whatever reason were proclaimed fascists and persecuted.

On May 12, 1945 the disputed lands of Venezia-Giulia were temporarily divided into two provinces. The first province included the territory of Gorizia/Gradisca, as well as Tarvisio, and parts of Friuli. The second province included the environs of Trieste, while Trieste itself became an autonomous city. To the south, Istria was divided into eight districts and the autonomous city of Pola. Fiume became an autonomous city directly under control of the Yugoslav military administration. There was no true local government, for in Trieste the Council reported directly to the Slovene district of Primijme. Yet, the city of Trieste was still identified as "Italian". The common call of Liberation Council supporters, "Trst je Nas" (Trieste is ours), was an affront to the Italians of Trieste. The first weeks of liberation were marred by local skirmishes and violent confrontations ending in killings. The

Triestine Italians of the CLN, in the meantime, pressed for Italian administration of Trieste and for AMG administration of Venezia-Giulia.

Tensions also ran high between the Allied Forces and the Yugoslavs. Churchill's Minister at Allied Headquarters, Harold Macmillan, foresaw problems resulting from cultural differences. On May 14 he said, "The [Allied] troops in the area will get to know and dislike the Yugoslavs. They will see the so-called Yugoslav administration thieving, raping and killing, and they will not like it".<sup>25</sup> Major Robert Hanley of the AMG observed on May 17 that,

"Yugoslav behavior in both Austria and Venezia-Giulia is making a very unfavorable impression on Allied troops. Our men are obliged to look on without power to intervene while actions which offend their traditional sense of justice are committed--as a result feeling against Yugoslavs is more strong and getting stronger daily."<sup>26</sup>

Allied soldiers observed the behavior of the People's Courts and the misbehavior of the Yugoslav troops. The war was over and the soldiers wanted to go home. They saw Yugoslav insistence on occupying Venezia-Giulia as the cause of their continued stay. The officers became increasingly certain that the Tito regime was pro-Soviet rather than pro-Western.<sup>27</sup> Thus many of the themes of the coming Cold War era asserted themselves in the initial days of the joint administration of Trieste. One was the myth of the totalitarian East as the alien and primitive antithesis of the West, the child of Enlightenment and liberalism. The East was associated with Byzantine, Balkan, and Slav, terms relegated to a place on the margins of civilization.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Allied Military Government**

Up until May, the definitive line of demarcation between the Allies and Yugoslavs had been left to Alexander and Tito. The Allies assumed that Tito would allow an Allied Military Government over the whole of Venezia-Giulia. When this assumption proved to be incorrect, Alexander asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff whether both American and British governments were prepared to use force to establish military control. Receiving no reply, he informed the Chiefs of Staff that he would act according to principles agreed on in Belgrade in February. Anglo-American task forces would administer those parts essential to Allied military operations. The next day the Combined Chiefs of Staff, with Truman's approval, ordered Alexander to establish the AMG throughout Venezia-Giulia, including Fiume.<sup>29</sup>

Alexander informed Tito of his mission, and Tito replied that the situation had appreciably changed since the February conversations, and that he intended to liberate Istria, Trieste, Monfalcone and the rest of the territory up to the Isonzo, and even up to the Austrian border. Thus Yugoslav troops would operate from Grado on the Adriatic via Gorizia to Tarvisio and Villach. Tito, however, conceded that Allied troops could use the ports of Pola and Trieste and the rail line from Trieste to Tarvisio. Alexander's Chief of Staff, General William Morgan went to Belgrade on May 8 with a proposed line of demarcation.(Map 17). All Yugoslav armed forces west of the line would fall under Allied command and later withdraw from the area. The Allies would recognize Yugoslav civil administration of the western part of Venezia-Giulia "as long as it worked satisfactorily".

Tito rejected this proposal and began to build up his reserves in the region. On May 19 Alexander censured Tito:

“Our policy publicly proclaimed is that territorial changes should be made only after thorough study and after full consultation and deliberation between the various governments involved. It is, however Marshal Tito’s apparent intention to establish his claims by force of arms and military occupation. Action of this kind would be all too reminiscent of Hitler, Mussolini and Japan. It is to prevent such actions that we have been fighting this war”.<sup>30</sup>

Both sides poured in reinforcements, and for a while it seemed that only armed conflict would settle the controversy. Washington’s reaction to this tense situation was one of moderation. Under-Secretary of State Joseph Grew and Secretary of War Henry Stimson agreed with Truman’s reaction: “I did not want to become involved in the Balkans in a way that could lead us into another world conflict”.<sup>31</sup> The US Ambassador to Allied Headquarters, Alexander Kirk, however, repeatedly warned his superiors of the drastic consequences in Italy if the original AMG strategy were set aside. The new Italian government also protested to the Americans, urging total AMG control of Venezia-Giulia as promised. The first post-war Italian government was unstable without decisive leadership.<sup>32</sup> The Socialist Pietro Nenni had formed a coalition with the Communists. Grew pointed out to the President the possible impact of a possible leftist Italian government on domestic politics, specifically the Italian-American electorate, yet Truman was reluctant to use armed force.<sup>33</sup>

The British Foreign Office strongly favored Alexander's plan for an operational compromise with the Yugoslavs, as long as the arrangements did indeed fulfill military needs and included Anglo-American control of Trieste. Kirk and his British counterpart successfully prevented the United States from asking the Soviets to intercede. Kirk was convinced that seeking Soviet concurrence in this matter would establish an undesirable precedent.

By late May, the State Department had settled on its postwar policy on Trieste in an emerging Cold War atmosphere. Trieste policy would be guided by three major concerns: 1. to secure complete control of Trieste, based on upholding the Atlantic Charter principle of self-determination and orderly territorial settlement; 2. to prevent further communist intrusions and 3. to ensure a democratic form of government and stability in Italy.<sup>34</sup> The State Department promptly drafted a cable to advise Churchill of the hardening of American policy toward Tito. The dispatch of May 11 concluded that Tito should be told that the minimum acceptable settlement was complete and exclusive control of Trieste, Pola and the lines of communication through Gorizia and Monfalcone by the AMG. With Churchill's concurrence, Truman wrote Stalin that he did not intend to prejudice legitimate Yugoslav claims to the territory in question, but at the same time, he instructed Generals Eisenhower and Alexander to organize a show of force in Venezia-Giulia.

American policy had reached a critical point. Many members of the Anglo-American forces in Trieste had perceived the Yugoslav policies in the first three weeks of occupation as unnecessarily harsh, and they grew increasingly hostile toward the Yugoslavs. The

systematic and unconcealed victimization of the local population (especially Italians) by the Yugoslav authorities continued. Field Marshal Alexander stated emphatically that any solution by which the Allies shared an area with Yugoslav troops or Partisans or permitted Yugoslav administration to function would not work.<sup>35</sup>

It was Tito who finally yielded, when convinced that the Soviet Union would not support him in any armed struggle with the Allies. On May 21 Tito stated that he would accept the Morgan Line, but he demanded that representatives of the Yugoslav army be allowed to take part in the AMG, that Partisan units be permitted to remain in the territory under Allied control, and that the Allied command act through civilian authorities already established. The Allies insisted instead that Tito recall all his armed forces from west of the Morgan Line. After further negotiations a compromise was reached in Belgrade on June 9, 1945. Venezia-Giulia was divided in accordance with the line proposed by Morgan into two zones—Zones A and B. The Yugoslav forces would displace east of the Morgan line while the Partisan detachments would either do the same or hand over their arms to the Allies.

The AMG assumed power on June 12. In accordance with the Morgan Line, Venezia-Giulia was divided into two regions. The AMG assumed control of Zone A (Map 18) which included three areas: Trieste, Gorizia and Pola, while the Yugoslavs retained Zone B which included the eastern areas of Venezia-Giulia and Istria. Ultimately the AMG remained the only government in Zone A to issue orders and decrees and to make appointments. Each area (Trieste, Gorizia and Pola) was to have an area president and

council. The AMG replaced the Yugoslav system of national committees with the Italian system of provincial government, purged of fascist features. The communist power base, their civil administration, was in jeopardy in Zone A with Allied occupation. This peril was apparent because the urban centers had Italian majorities, and most influential Italians opposed Yugoslav administration because they were Italian nationalists and urban middle-class supporters of liberal-democracy.

The united Italian-Slovene Communists of Zone A thus prepared to defend their civil administration and develop a giant propaganda campaign claiming Zone A for Yugoslavia at the Italian peace conference scheduled within the year. To achieve these aims the local communists decided at a meeting of delegates in Trieste on June 4, 1945 to form a united bloc for Venezia-Giulia. After the signing of the Belgrade agreement, however, the communists concentrated their concerns on Trieste.<sup>36</sup>

The AMG officers who began operating in Zone A on June 12 were charged with the responsibility of not only exercising military control but also of bringing stable, impartial administration until its final disposition was determined by a peace treaty with Italy. Alexander appointed Lieutenant General John Harding, commander of the Thirteenth Corps of the British Eighth Army as his local representative. At a meeting on June 20, it was agreed that use would be made of any Yugoslav civil administration which was already set up and which, in the view of the Allies, worked satisfactorily, but the AMG could change the structure, if necessary. The Yugoslavs asserted that the organs of local government installed during the forty days were an expression of the wishes of the majority of the population and

contended that the AMG was obliged to work through those institutions. The Anglo-Americans refused to accept this interpretation.

While the Yugoslavs insisted on keeping their civilian administration, the AMG began to replace the administration with its own. Except for its responsibility to the Supreme Allied commander, the AMG had to be completely independent, and entirely removed from any connection with the Italian government. Laws passed by the new Italian government would not apply to the AMG governed areas. At the same time any existing Italian laws and administrative practices directed against the minority rights of the Slovenes were annulled.

In an attempt to moderate the persistent discontent of the Slovenes, the AMG guaranteed certain fundamental rights to the Slovene population: 1. official decrees were written in the Slovene tongue; 2. Slovenes could use their own language in the courts and 3. Slovenes were permitted to petition the authorities for readopting their old Slovene names. The AMG also instituted a program of establishing Slovene schools.

The AMG conducted a demographic survey of Zone A in September 1945. The AMG staff acknowledged that there was no dependable census for the area, but nevertheless they used figures provided by the 1921 Italian census, because it was regarded as relatively uninfluenced by fascist policies. On the basis of the statistics derived from this effort, they assumed that in Trieste the ratio of Italians to Slovenes was six to one, while in the hinterland, Slovenes far outnumbered Italians.



Ethnic conflict persisted in both the rural areas and in the cities. Country doctors, often Italian speaking, who had worked among the Slovene population for years, were rejected by patients who refused to speak Italian with them. Even traditionally Catholic Slovenes were hostile to the pro-Italian Catholic hierarchy. The AMG had difficulty in implementing its policies in the rural areas where the majority of the population was Slovene and biased against both the Italians and the Allies. Slovenes who collaborated with the AMG were seen by their neighbors as traitors to a common Slovene cause. In part, this view may have been justified, since the AMG purposely hired anti-communist Slovenes for their reliability. They were often victims of communist persecution because they had always opposed communism and had during the war even sympathized with the fascists.<sup>37</sup> In the cities all the parties dominated by Italians, including moderate communists, favored Italian national identity. By early 1946, the national PCI under Togliatti's leadership had retreated from its support for the incorporation of Trieste in Yugoslavia. However, the militant left wing communists remained strictly pro-Yugoslav.

Much of the ethnic tension in the immediate war years could be attributed not only to dispute over territorial rights but also differences as to ethnic identity. Carlo Schiffrer, reinforced the idea of Italian superiority in his study Historic Glance at The Relations Between Italians and Slavs in Venezia-Giulia by stressing the Roman-Italian heritage. This historical analysis appealed to the Italian middle class and to many of the Italian workers who witnessed economic competition from the Slavs, and it set up an antagonistic identities of the Slavs and Italians. One was rustic and the other urban.<sup>38</sup> Schiffrer wrote,

“The population of the towns are Italian and therefore the flowering of the urban economy means an economic and demographic flowering of the Italian element.”

According to Schiffrer, nineteenth century Italian nationalism during the *risorgimento* renewed Italian culture. The Slavs, in contrast, had a heritage of a “narrow culture”.

Although the Italians (Lombards and Venetians), Friulians and Slovenes were under the dominion of the Habsburgs during the nineteenth century, there was no shared nationalist ambition between the Slavs and Italians for their cultures were different. With an Italian urban majority, the “superior vitality of Italian culture” would ultimately do its own work towards assimilation of the Slav minorities.<sup>39</sup>

Thus the post-war situation in Venezia-Giulia was interpreted by the Italians of Trieste as a struggle between two cultures. The meaning of the forty days took on significance only in the context of the threat to *Italianita*. Tito himself represented Slav civilization.<sup>40</sup> By annexation of Venezia-Giulia into his system it could be expected that the region would lose its Italian identity. The events during the forty days, the stories of disappearing citizens and of the *foibe* offered proof. Just as the Fascists exploited the glories of Roman history, the nationalists in Trieste used the same myth.

### **The Peace Talks**

The international peace talks began in September 1945 with an attempt to settle the territorial division between Italy and Yugoslavia along ethnic lines. Admiral Ellery Stone of the Allied Commission urged that favorable peace terms were essential if Italy was to be preserved as a bastion of democracy in the Mediterranean. Alcide De Gasperi, the leader of

the Christian Democrats and Premier from 1945-1953, further expressed concerns of a resurgence of fanatical nationalism in April 1946. He repeatedly advised the Americans and British that unjust peace terms (meaning the cession of Trieste to Yugoslavia) would strengthen the Italian extreme right and debilitate the centrist, democratic parties.<sup>41</sup>

A Boundary Commission composed of representatives from Britain, the United States, France and Russia went to Venezia-Giulia to determine a line distinguishing its Italian from its Slav population. The only deviation to the rule of ethnic delineation was the assurance that all states had equal access to the port of Trieste for international commercial purposes.<sup>42</sup> In May 1946, after completing its field work and perusing mountains of petitions and arguments, the Commission returned to the peace talks with four different boundaries, each one reflecting the bias of the various nationalities of the delegation. (Map 19). There was very little agreement on the boundaries. The American proposal was closest to the Italian claim, while the Soviet suggestion was virtually identical to that of the Yugoslavs. The British experts concentrated on written documents. The American representatives found contact with the population more useful, but also examined demographic trends since the Austrian census of 1910. Both the British and Americans opposed annexation of Trieste to Yugoslavia.<sup>43</sup> The French, on the other hand, seemed to have had two objectives. These were to balance the number of minorities and to trace a mid-path between the American and Russian lines.

The French line was accepted as a compromise, but it was still regarded as unsatisfactory. The Americans and British proposed that Trieste become a “free city”. A Free Territory of Trieste (FTT) was not a rejection of the ethnic principle; it merely served as a better alternative and reflected a shift toward British and American self-interest. Facing an increasingly intransigent Tito and the threat of Communism in Italy as well as in the Trieste region, the creation of a so-called autonomous region would provide for continued British and American influence in the region. This measure would allow the continuation of AMG rule.<sup>44</sup>

The idea of internationalization offered the opportunity to break the deadlock in the Council of Foreign Ministers. After months of impasse, Georges Bidault, the French Foreign Minister, suggested setting up a temporary international regime for Trieste under the United Nations. The Soviets continued to stall for a time. On July 1, 1946, the Soviets accepted a French proposal that Yugoslavia receive all the area east of the French line while the region west of the French line south of Duino (Devin) to Cittanuova (Novigrad) would constitute an international territory of Trieste. Secretary of State James Byrnes said “We didn’t like the free territory idea, but since this was the only way out of the dilemma, we were determined that the regime would be set up so that it had a chance to work”.<sup>45</sup> Both Yugoslavia and Italy denounced the idea of internationalizing Trieste as unsatisfactory. The Yugoslavs, however, accepted the FTT as a better alternative than Italian annexation. The Italians insisted that the Free Territory not only denied Italy Trieste, it also cost Italy the Istrian coast. From 1947 on, large numbers of Italian refugees from Istria and Zone B fled to

Zone A and asked for repatriation to Italy or emigration. Many blamed the Croats and Slovenes for their misfortunes and blindly hated Slavs.<sup>46</sup>

As a result of the Peace Treaty, Italy retained Gorizia, Gradisca, Tarvisio and Monfalcone, but she lost the rest of her First World War gains—Istria, and Fiume. No agreement was reached on metropolitan Trieste. The French line would have given Trieste and Capodistria to the Italians, but Capodistria was on the eastern side of the Morgan Line and was occupied by Yugoslavs. So the peace treaty simply named the whole disputed area as the Free Territory of Trieste which remained divided de facto into two zones: Zone A and Zone B. (Map 20).

### **Enter the Cold War**

The postwar division of Europe had crystallized when the Italian peace treaty came into effect. The implementation of the Free Territory lagged. By the late summer of 1947, a governor for the FTT had yet to be appointed. The Italian peace treaty came into force as expected on September 15, 1947. It had been assumed that the new Italo-Yugoslav frontier would also be established at that time and the autonomous FTT would come into existence. In March 1947, East-West tensions grew more pronounced as the Soviet Union tightened its grip on Eastern Europe. As East-West tensions wore on, the Americans and British grew less concerned to secure appointment of a governor of the FTT, and without a governor the mechanism for establishing a civil government in the FTT could not be set in motion. The Anglo-American policy makers concluded that maintaining the status quo would be the best means of preventing a Yugoslav takeover of Trieste. The AMG argued that the FTT was

being used as a means of expanding the pro-Yugoslav movement's popular base and creating a pro-Yugoslav bias in the mind of any future governor. In fact, an intelligence report for October 1946 emphasized the possibility that the Free Territory might inspire a "Democratic Front" under Communist auspices.<sup>47</sup> The real fear for the Allies was not a racial war between Italian and Slav but cooperation between Italian and Slav communists for common political interests.

If the Free Territory of Trieste had become a fully autonomous political entity, it would have been poised precariously between two Cold War blocs. Instead, its anticipated birth on September 1947 was abortive, and the territory in question remained divided into two zones. The most pressing concern for policy makers in Washington would be to ensure that their Trieste policies conformed with broader American objectives in the Cold War. As no governor had been selected for the FTT, General Terrance Airey, commander of the Anglo-American forces in Zone A, issued on October 10, 1947 a declaration that the AMG would continue to govern under his authority. Ten thousand American and British troops would remain in the area. On the same day, Yugoslav military authorities sent Airey a note stating that, at midnight, a Yugoslav detachment would move on the city of Trieste and take up positions therein. With concurrence of both American and British governments, Airey warned the Yugoslavs that if they sent troops into Trieste, he would respond with force.<sup>48</sup> On the next day the Yugoslav government instructed local military commanders not to enter the city and informed the British and Americans that it would pursue the matter through diplomatic channels. This brief encounter strengthened American policy makers' tendency to

view the Trieste problem in Cold War terms.<sup>49</sup> The issue was no longer Italian-Slovene ethnicity, but one of geopolitics.

In late October 1947, British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin advised Washington that in view of the apparent Yugoslav threat, he had concluded that the FTT was not viable and he favored the partition of the territory by which the Italians would regain sovereignty. To the Americans, the time was not ripe for revising the Italian peace treaty, and they intended to support Airey's efforts to maintain a barrier between the two zones and to prevent Communist subversion in Zone A.

In early 1948, the Cold War confrontation in Europe worsened. The Communists took power in Czechoslovakia and the Russians interfered with the flow of aid to Berlin. In Italy there was a distinct possibility that Communism (in the form of a Italian Communist-Socialist coalition) would prevail in the April elections. On March 6, Washington suggested that the French, British and Americans might shortly declare their support for the return of Trieste to Italy. On March 20, 1948, the Peace Treaty stipulations were replaced by the Tripartite Proposal which promised the return of the FTT to Italy.<sup>50</sup> Not surprisingly the Yugoslavs protested immediately and the Italian Communists complained that the statement was merely an opportunistic electoral stratagem. The Soviets responded that the proposal was a revision of the peace treaty and was unacceptable. The tactics of influencing the election were successful, however. The Italian Christian Democrats under De Gasperi won forty-eight percent of the vote.<sup>51</sup>

On June 28, 1948, the balance of power shifted. Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform (an organization of the Communist parties of six countries of eastern Europe, USSR, plus those of Italy and France). During the war, there had been conflicts of some importance between Tito and Stalin, but these gave way to a period of honeymoon from 1945 until 1947 in which Tito was seen by East and West alike as Stalin's most loyal and favorite disciple.<sup>52</sup> Stalin encouraged flexibility and diversity among the various Communist parties which were told to follow whatever way seemed most promising for them to establish themselves in their respective countries. In other words, they were following "separate roads to Socialism", as the Italian Communists had done in nourishing an alliance with the Socialists.

The Yugoslav leaders took an independent stand, because the Yugoslavs pursued policies and measures that were best suited to local conditions and that were most likely to keep Tito and his supporters in power. An appeal by the Soviets to Yugoslav Communists to overthrow Tito met with very little response, and most of the nation rallied behind Tito. It demonstrated that the Partisan movement during the war had bred a strong nationalist feeling.

Allied policies towards Yugoslavia were conditioned by other major events of the Cold War, such as the civil war in Greece.<sup>53</sup> The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform surprised the Western powers. They had hitherto perceived communism as a monolithic, expansionist movement. With Tito's expulsion, this perception changed. They



now saw Communism as a movement that might break up into rival factions, if existing tendencies were encouraged skillfully.

In the immediate years following the split, Yugoslavia was seen and treated more as an ideological wedge in the side of the supposedly crumbling Communist monolith. Its exploitation fitted into American policy for the containment of Soviet Communism. In the summer of 1948, the British Foreign Office produced a "Bastion paper", which identified a defensive line for NATO. Any breach in this line would enable the Soviets to penetrate Western Europe and cause the whole line to collapse.<sup>54</sup> The principal bastions of the Western line were Germany, Austria, Trieste, Greece and Turkey. Therefore, the Allies were committed to integrate Trieste into the Western European defense system.<sup>55</sup>

With the Soviet-Yugoslav break, Washington assumed a wait-and-see policy, deliberately stalling debates on Trieste. As it happened, Yugoslavia also changed its policy toward the idea of a Free Trieste Territory in mid-1949, by deciding to favor some sort of partition as the only basis for a realistic settlement. Yet the local clash of Italian and Yugoslav nationalism created a powerful obstacle preventing a prompt solution along the lines of a negotiated settlement.

Fearful of a Soviet attack on the former satellite and hoping to integrate Yugoslavia, at least partially, into the Western defense system, the Americans began supplying military assistance to Yugoslavia in 1951. The precariousness of Tito's position made Anglo-Americans less likely to press on the Trieste issue. Meanwhile, the Italians rearmed and sought entry into the European Community. The Italians still hoped for a better territorial

settlement than Zone A and claimed that less than satisfactory settlement would provoke domestic instability and would undermine Italy's contribution to the Western Alliance. Foreign Minister Anthony Eden became convinced that the best prospect for early settlement lay in partition of the FTT along the existing zones. The Americans agreed, but they were reluctant to apply pressure on De Gasperi to modify the Italian position which demanded a continuous ethnic line to include coastal towns in Zone B. By late 1952 the State Department sensed signs of wavering in Tito's position. It was now America's turn to move unilaterally by seeking to devise an alternative compromise solution that might meet Italian objections. In December the United States submitted a new proposal that was more favorable to Italy: Zone A, Trieste and Capodistria would go to Italy, while Yugoslavia would have Zone B and a few Slovene villages in Zone A. The Italians rejected this proposal. The British then proposed to allow the Italians to take over full administration of Zone A, the withdrawal of Anglo-American troops and replacement by Italian troops.<sup>56</sup>

The State Department became concerned with the potential results of the 1954 Italian national election. By turning over the administration and military control of Zone A, the Allies would make a de facto return of the city to Italy. This would give the Christian Democrats a boost at the polls. The Christian Democrats had suffered considerable losses in the June 1953 elections and De Gasperi fell from power shortly thereafter, replaced by Giuseppe Pella. Pella put pressure on the United States and Britain to support Italy on the Trieste issue by refusing to ratify the European Defense Community (EDC) and even threatening to withdraw from NATO.

This imbroglio became the crisis of October 1953. The new American Ambassador, Claire Booth Luce, saw Trieste as the key log in the Italian foreign policy jam and demanded a solution. She warned:

“For the want of Trieste, an Issue was lost  
 For the want of an Issue, the Election was lost.  
 For the want of an Election, De Gasperi was lost.  
 For the want of De Gasperi, his NATO policies were lost.  
 For the want of his NATO policies, Italy was lost.  
 For the want of Italy, Europe was lost.  
 For the want of Europe, America----?”<sup>57</sup>

The force of this argument impressed Eisenhower, and he considered that the Italians have been our friends for a long time and the “Jugs are Johnny-Come-Latelies”.<sup>58</sup> The Americans wanted Italy to ratify the treaty creating the European Defense Community; therefore they preferred to back the Italians, without overtly offending the Yugoslavs. At the same time, the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, stated in a press conference that American policy on Trieste was no longer necessarily bound by the Tripartite Proposal and that the United States had been exploring other alternatives.<sup>59</sup> His statement caused a furor in Italy, and Luce advised the State Department that failure to find a rapid solution of the question will result in great harm to American-Italian relations. Both the British and Americans agreed to present Italy and Yugoslavia with a fait accompli by declaring they had decided to withdraw their troops from Zone A and to allow Italy to take control of the area.

The Trieste crisis of autumn 1953 owed its origins to the loss of patience by the Western powers which after the eight-year impasse is only too understandable. Nevertheless,

they made a mistake. Tito wanted the problem to be kept in cold storage. Various proposals for a settlement were made between the two parties in 1951-52, but nothing came of them. The Western foreign ministers contemplated using financial aid as a lever for getting Yugoslavia to resolve the situation, but the Yugoslav press at the end of August 1952 implied that the Yugoslavs intended to annex Zone B. The Italians responded by moving their troops towards the frontier.<sup>60</sup> Tito did not follow through on this threat, but he saw that the Anglo-Americans failed to urge Italy to withdraw her forces from the frontier. It was an indication of Allied intentions. In September 1953 Tito once more suggested the internationalization of Trieste. On October 8, 1953, the British and Americans announced imminent withdrawal of their forces, handing over the administration of Zone A to the Italians. The untimely and ill-prepared declaration which so obviously favored the Italians caused Yugoslav relations with the West to take an irremediable turn for the worse.

The Italians were relatively satisfied, for they regained Trieste. The Yugoslavs however were outraged that they had not been consulted. Tito publicly denounced the Anglo-American plan and declared, "we would consider entry of Italian troops into Zone A as an act of aggression against our country"<sup>61</sup> John Foster Dulles understood the threat that Yugoslavia would enter Zone A, despite the presence of US and British forces, if any Italian soldiers entered the zone. On October 14, 1953, Eisenhower gave orders for several US warships to take up positions in the Adriatic.

The situation became increasingly dangerous. Both Yugoslav and Italian military sent reinforcements to the border regions. Under the circumstances the Anglo-American powers assured the Yugoslavs that there would be no immediate withdrawal of their troops. The Yugoslavs suggested a conference of the governments of the United States, Britain, Italy and Yugoslavia. There were some obstacles to overcome, but officials worked to surmount them.<sup>62</sup> Early in 1954 American and British policy makers finally secured Yugoslav and Italian agreement to a formula for organizing negotiations. The actual negotiating process began in February with meetings in London with representatives of the United States, Britain, and Yugoslavia and the three parties made an agreement in May. The Western powers sweetened the pill by promising economic aid of twenty million dollars to facilitate construction of a new port at Capodistria (Koper) in Zone B. Now the Allies had to meet a new Italian government, headed by Mario Scelba. After a month of negotiating, the Italians accepted the proposed terms. On October 5, 1954, representatives of the four states signed the memorandum of understanding in London. The departure of the Anglo-American garrison on October 26, 1954 ended almost a decade of direct involvement in Trieste. In the afternoon, thousands of Triestines crowded into Piazza Unita' to see the Italian tricolor once again raised over their city.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Novak, Trieste, 132.

<sup>2</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Terzuolo, Red Adriatic, 44.

<sup>4</sup> Novak, Trieste, 135-139.

<sup>5</sup> Diego DeCastro, Il Problema di Trieste: Genesi e sviluppi della questione giuliana in relazione agli avvenimenti internazionali (1943-1952) (Bologna: Licinio Capelli Editore, 1952), 176.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>7</sup> Novak, Trieste, 147.

<sup>8</sup> DeCastro estimates that over 20,000 Slovenes and Croats, civilians and military, were turned over to the Yugoslavs by the British.

<sup>9</sup> Novak, Trieste, 145.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>12</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 55.

<sup>13</sup> Geoffrey Cox, The Race for Trieste, (London: Kimber, 1977), 8.

<sup>14</sup> The author's wife and family, although of Slovene-Friulian ethnicity, stood on the streets welcoming the New Zealanders. They have fond recollections of the gifts of chocolates.

<sup>15</sup> Cox, The Race for Trieste, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Glenda Sluga, "Liberating Trieste, 1945-1954: Nation, History and the Cold War", Diss., University of Sussex, 1993, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Novak, Trieste, 169. The American 56<sup>th</sup> Division of Fifth Corps attached to the British Eighth Army patrolled along the Gorizia-Tarvisio rail-line.

<sup>18</sup> Sluga, "Liberating Trieste," 31.

## NOTES

<sup>19</sup> The British were impressed with the functioning of the local government in Trieste, Monfalcone, and in Gorizia (Ibid, 32-36.)

<sup>20</sup> Novak, Trieste, 157

<sup>21</sup> Marco Pirina, Genocidio: Gorizia, Trieste, Pola, Istria, Fiume, Zara, Dalmazia, (Pordenone: Centro studi e ricerche storiche Silentes Loquimur, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> British intelligence reports identified that all members "elected" were Communist, in party membership or in leanings. ( Sluga, "Liberating Trieste", 67).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 175.

<sup>25</sup> Beloff, Tito's Flawed Legacy, 123.

<sup>26</sup> Sluga, "Liberating Trieste", 35.

<sup>27</sup> Novak, Trieste, 192.

<sup>28</sup> Sluga, "Liberating Trieste", 45.

<sup>29</sup> Osvaldo Croci, "Search for Parity: Italian and Yugoslav Attitudes toward the Question of Trieste", Slovene Studies, Vol. 12 No. 2 (1990), 141.

<sup>30</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 53.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>32</sup> This condition differed considerably with the installation of the second post-war government, led by Alcide De Gasperi, the first Catholic politician to become Prime Minister of united Italy. He was to remain leader of successive governments until August 1953. He led a no-nonsense law and order government, anxious to show that anti-Fascism could be responsible.

<sup>33</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 57.

<sup>34</sup> DeCastro, Il problema di Trieste, 206.

## NOTES

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<sup>35</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Terzuolo, "Nationalism and Communist Resistance", 44.

<sup>37</sup> Sluga, "Liberating Trieste", 118.

<sup>38</sup> Schiffrer was at first the Socialist representative to the CLN in 1945, and later, in 1946, the Deputy President of Trieste. Schiffrer, also an historian, worked with Arnold Toynbee in London from 1941-1944. Toynbee had a more internationalist viewpoint.

<sup>39</sup> Carlo Schiffrer, Historic Glance at the Relations between Italians and Slavs in Venezia-Giulia, (Trieste: Faro, 1955), 20.

<sup>40</sup> Sluga, "Liberating Trieste", 160.

<sup>41</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 89.

<sup>42</sup> Novak, Trieste, 242.

<sup>43</sup> For the historical importance of censuses and maps in the rise of national consciousness, see Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities, 163-89.

<sup>44</sup> Sluga, "Liberating Trieste", 131.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 135.

<sup>46</sup> The author interviewed two former Italian land owners and shop keepers in Istria before the war (Neila and Ilse Casone). After the war they were dispossessed of their lands. In the early 1970's the Yugoslav government gave them minor compensation (40 percent of prewar value). (Neila and Ilse Casone, interviewed by author, February 1984, 1986 and 1989).

<sup>47</sup> Staff of Rep British PolAd Trieste, 'Situation Report 18-24 October 1946', Politic: (Southern) Yugoslavia.

<sup>48</sup> There were approximately 80,000 Yugoslav troops in Zone B versus the 5,000 British and 5,000 American troops in Zone A. At the border where a Yugoslav tank battalion had assembled to cross into Zone A, the United States army had only a platoon of twelve men (more of a squad, than platoon) armed with a bazooka and a machine gun. The two forces faced each other off until after two hours the Yugoslav forces turned about. (Robert P. Joyce, "Brinkmanship in the Free Territory of Trieste" Foreign Service Journal, Vol. 49, No. 3 [1972], 18-28).



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<sup>49</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 105.

<sup>50</sup> Novak, Trieste, 136.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>52</sup> Beatrice Heuser, Western 'Containment' Policies in the Cold War: The Yugoslav Case, 1948-53, (London: Routledge, 1989), 21.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid x.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>55</sup> Tito was acutely aware of Western intentions. In the summer of 1948 when the Yugoslavs were uncertain about Soviet plans, M. Djilas noted that Tito had to rely on American support throughout his dispute with the Soviets. Tito exclaimed, "The Americans are not fools. They won't let the Russians reach the Adriatic." (M. Djilas, Tito, 125.)

<sup>56</sup> Heuser, Western 'Containment', 199.

<sup>57</sup> The last line, not sent to Eisenhower was "All for the want of a two-penny town". (Rabel, Between East and West, 149).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>60</sup> Croci, "Search for Parity", 146.

<sup>61</sup> Rabel, Between East and West, 150.

<sup>62</sup> Heuser, Western 'Containment' 204.

## EPILOGUE

In the years following 1954, while the East and West still confronted each other in the Cold War, both Yugoslavia and Italy experienced changes. In foreign affairs Tito continued to seek leadership in the emerging Third World movement of ex-colonies, while maintaining a balance between centralism and federalism in domestic affairs. When Tito died in 1980, the world waited for chaos to break out, but the system of federalism and sharing by the ethnic groups planned by Tito's successors worked for a short time. In setting up the republics, the communist leadership used a blend of ethnicity and historic tradition, giving each component "nation" a territorial base. The Communist Party was the only national organization which transcended the bounds of narrow ethnic separatism and could base its appeals on ideology. During the war the Partisans were able to mobilize a unified national resistance. This unity and discipline made the party legitimate.<sup>1</sup> After the war, nationalism was repressed, and the Constitution of 1974 restructured the government so that strict party rule prevailed through the local parties in the republics under the guidance of the aging dictator. Tito had known how to balance regional demands for federalism with national demands for centralism. After his death the party's legitimacy eroded with increasing economic misery and political paralysis. The two historic tendencies of Yugoslav politics began pulling in opposite directions. The Serbs tried to tighten up the centralization, while the non-Serbs tried to loosen it even more. But the system held on through inertia for a decade until communism collapsed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

When Slobodan Milosevic rose to power in Serbia in 1987, the legitimating force of Titoist principles had been exhausted and the fear of a resurgent Serbia provoked a chain reaction. The election of Slovenian Ante Markovic, as president of the federal government, failed to bring a political truce and an attenuation of national passions. The Serbs still asserted themselves to a greater extent in the economic and political affairs of Slovenia. For example, the Serbs insisted on centralized control of the Bank of Slovenia in 1988.

In the spring of 1990, the Slovene Communists walked out of the Congress of the League of Yugoslav Communists, and the Yugoslav Party fell apart. In June 1991 when Slovenia announced that it would secede, the Yugoslav army made a feeble attempt to regain control of the international border posts between Slovenia and Italy. After a week of tension, the army stayed in its barracks and later withdrew eastward. Elsewhere, in Croatia and Bosnia, there were confrontations. It followed that other non-Serbs did not want to stay in a rump Yugoslavia obviously dominated by the Serbs.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, on June 25, 1991, Slovenia became an independent state for the first time in its history.

In Italy, Italians enjoyed the economic miracle of the Sixties. Although domestic politics caused change of governments once a year on the average, the economy grew, and the democratic system stabilized. The introduction of television did more in unifying a nation in language than any other factor, and despite the move towards greater regional autonomy in the Sixties and Seventies, the Italians moved toward greater national identity. In Friuli, the economic miracle was especially pronounced. Textile and light industries increased urbanization in the centers of Udine and Gorizia. For Trieste, however, Carlo Sforza's vision

of decaying commerce became fact. Cut off from Austrian and Yugoslav hinterlands the city has only a shadow of its former greatness. The Croats have developed Fiume, and the Slovenes have expanded Capodistria (Koper) to become a major port.

No longer are there heavy defensive barriers between Italy and Yugoslavia. The “training areas” along the border have been abandoned. Only customs personnel patrol the frontiers to prevent the movement of contraband. In the fields of banking and commerce, the Italians have financed Slovene development projects and have also backed the admission of the Slovenes into the European Economic Union. In the reduced lands of Venezia-Giulia (the province of Gorizia) and in Trieste, there are Slovene elementary and secondary schools. Slovene intellectual life is also vibrant in Trieste. The Slovenes maintain two theaters and cultural centers, as well as publish Slovene newspapers. Across the border in Slovenia and Istria in the former Italian cities of Pola and Fiume, little Italian is spoken, for the vast majority of Italians migrated after 1947.

We have observed the development of the Slovene people as they progressed toward a separate national state. Slovenia has followed Hroch’s classic model of central European nationalism. First the intellectuals became interested in the ethnic, particularly linguistic, attributes of a people. This ethnic awareness expanded to the educated middle class through literature, and finally, by the power of a popular press, to literate masses. Ultimately, after years of dependency upon the Habsburg Empire and upon Yugoslavia, the Slovenes achieved their national state, after several attempts to merge themselves in a unified South Slav state.

The people of Friuli, however, did not follow the same path. They recognized their particular culture and language, and celebrated it, but they did not proceed to nationhood. One reason for Friuli remaining a province of Italy was that language did not become an issue. All levels of the citizenry--intelligentsia, middle-class urban and farmer--used the Friulian language in everyday conversation and read it in local journals, but the people of Friuli did not insist on the singular use of their vernacular in the schools or in public affairs. Friulian is taught in the local schools as a literary language, as the Middle English of Chaucer, yet Friulian is a living language.<sup>4</sup> The people of Friuli remained content with the semi-autonomous government of their region. The different paths taken by the Slovenes and Friulians, particularly in their demands or lack of demands for the official use of the vernacular, tend to support the conclusions drawn by Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson that nation-building followed a linguistic imperative. Hobsbawm points out that the official use of the vernacular was critical in achieving national consciousness in East European states. Anderson stresses the importance of spreading the idea of community through the mass press, or to use his term print capitalism. Without popular support, ethnic and national consciousness would remain arrested at the first or second stage of Hroch's model. The Slovenes met both Hobsbawm's and Anderson's criteria and became a nation-state; the Friulians did not meet either criterion and remained an autonomous region of Italy.

Nationalism and irredentism played their roles in Italy and in Yugoslavia. In many ways the fortunes of the Slovenes and the Friulians depended not only upon the policies at the national level, but also upon the policies of the great powers in the international arena. Prior to the First World War, Austria-Hungary, Great Britain, France and Russia all played in the power game. After the war, Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy exercised influence in the region. Finally after the Second World War, the former Allies, the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union positioned themselves to gain advantage in the new power game of the Cold War.

This thesis has presented the short history of a regional conflict over a small strip of land where three major ethnic/linguistic groups (German, Italian and Slav) converge. For years these peoples lived for better or worse under Habsburg rule. With the nineteenth century, the pace of intellectual and economic life accelerated. The intellectual movements fostered nationalism and education, and industrialization promoted the growth of cities which provided the breeding ground for national awareness among the masses. Nationalism, irredentism, and imperialism germinated and reproduced a half century of war and international tension. The 1975 Treaty of Osimo peacefully resolved the boundary question of Venezia-Giulia. The treaty could not eliminate prejudice and mutual mistrust between two neighboring ethnic groups, but demonstrated that compromise and accommodation were preferable to conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> George Klein and Milan Reban, ed. *The Politics of Ethnicity in Eastern Europe*, (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1981), 4

<sup>2</sup> Stefan Pavlowitch, "Who is 'Balkanizing' Whom? The Misunderstandings Between the Debris of Yugoslavia and an Unprepared West", *Daedalus*, Vol. 23 No. 2 (Spring 1992), 207-209.

<sup>3</sup> Benderly and Kraft, *Independent Slovenia*, 42.

<sup>4</sup> A parallel ethnic group which has a distinct language, written and spoken are the people of Brittany in France. They have a literary tradition of a Celtic language, but they are French in citizenship and share a common historical tradition.

**MAPS**

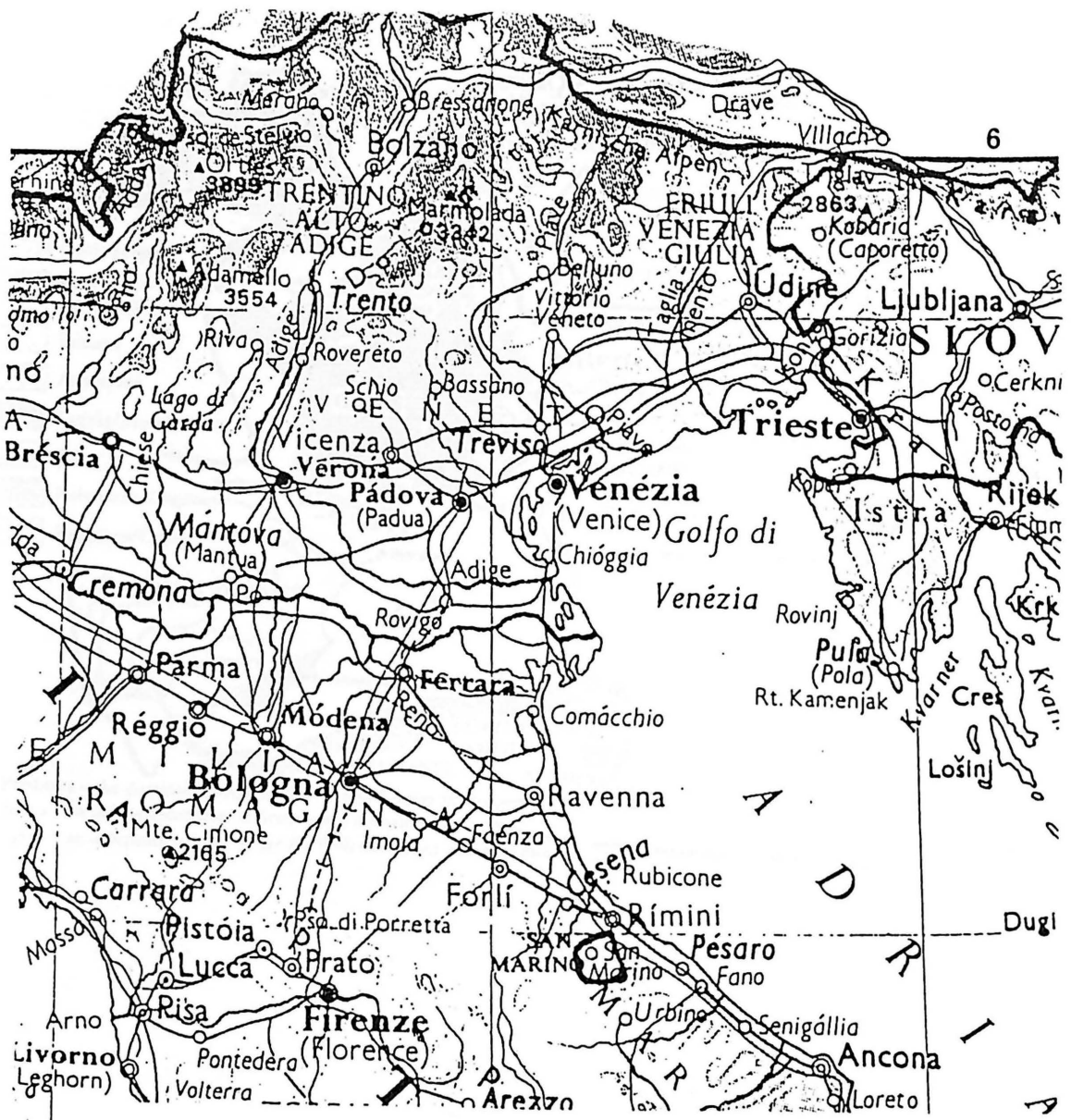
Map 1	Venezia Giulia and Friuli
Map 2	Roman Provinces 200 BC-300 AD
Map 3	The Division of Friuli under Austria and Venice
Map 4	Slavic Migrations
Map 5	Territory of Samo
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Map 14	The Banovene of Yugoslavia
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Map 17	The "Morgan Line"
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Map 19	Julian Region Boundary Proposals, 1946
Map 20	Free Territory of Trieste, 1947-1954



## Map 1

## Venezia Giulia and Friuli

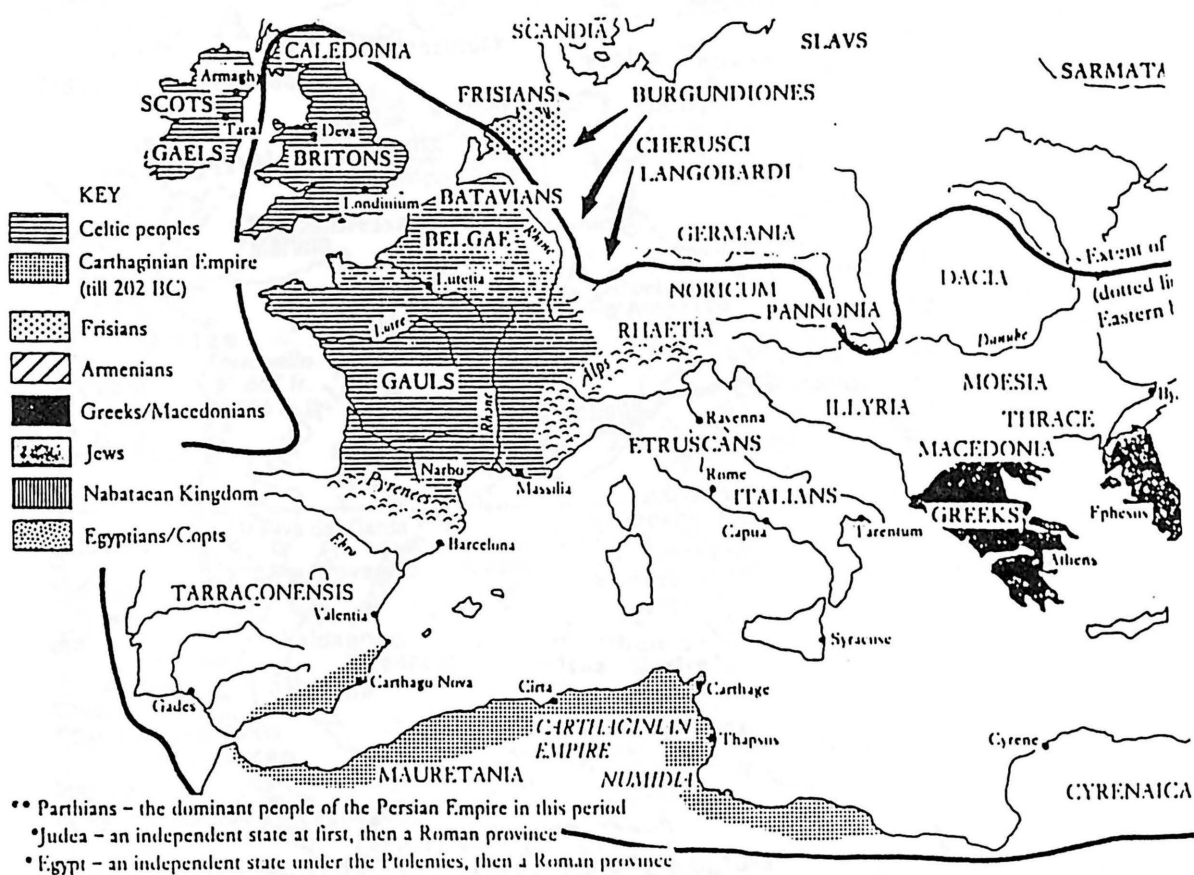
Source: Hammond World Atlas



### Map 2

## Roman Provinces 200BC-300AD

Source: Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations



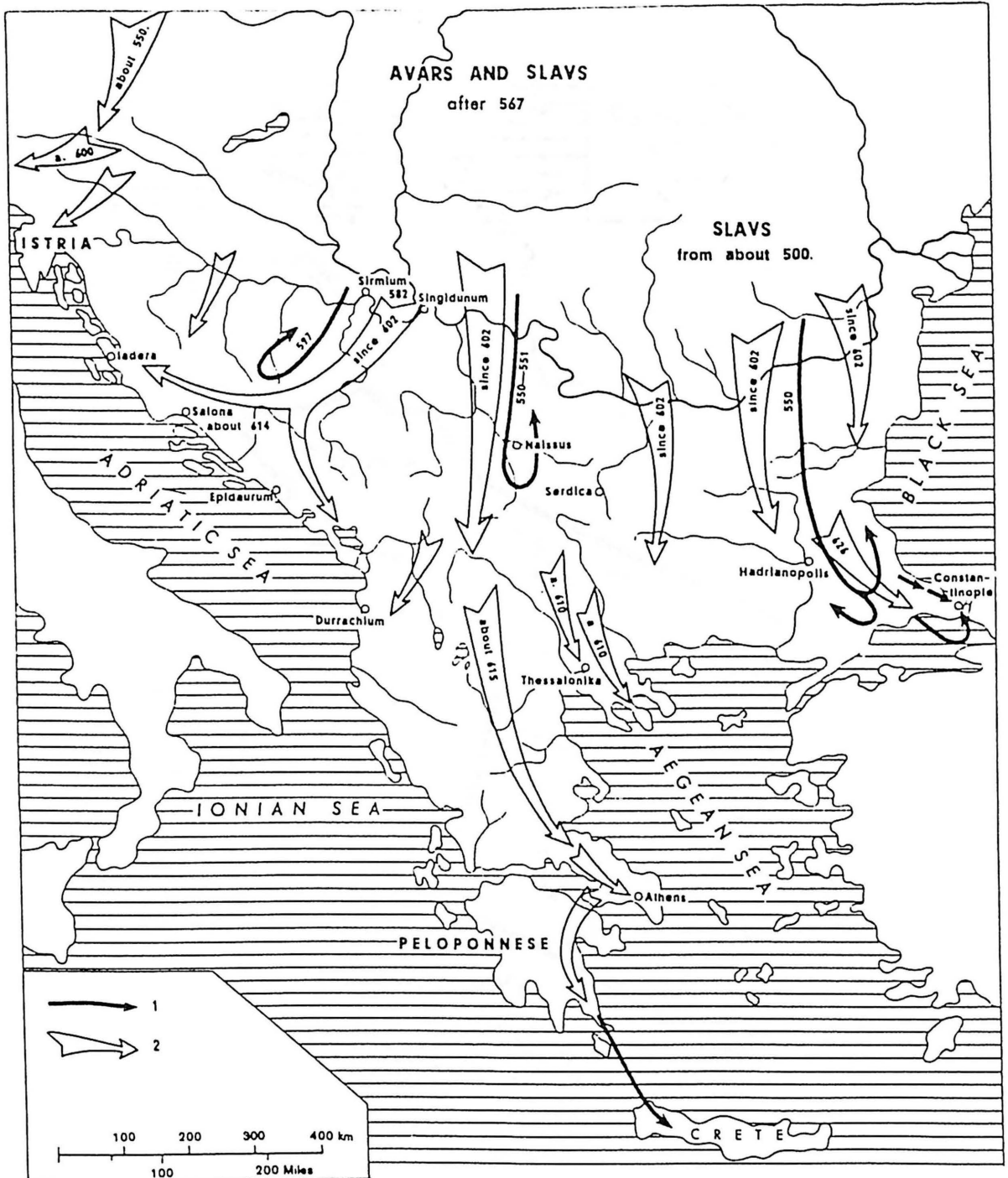
## Map 3

The Division of Friuli under Austria and Venice



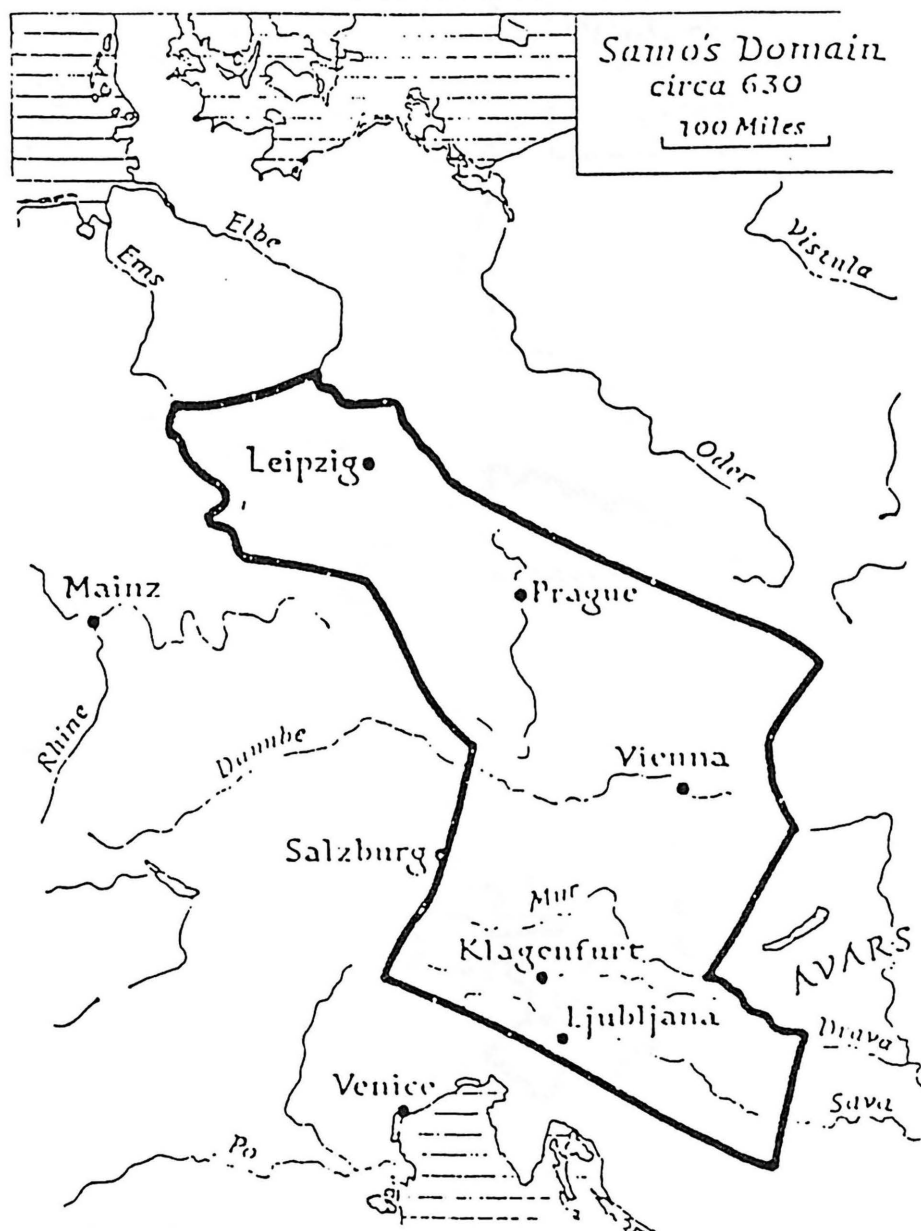
## Map 4

## Slavic Migrations

Source: Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations

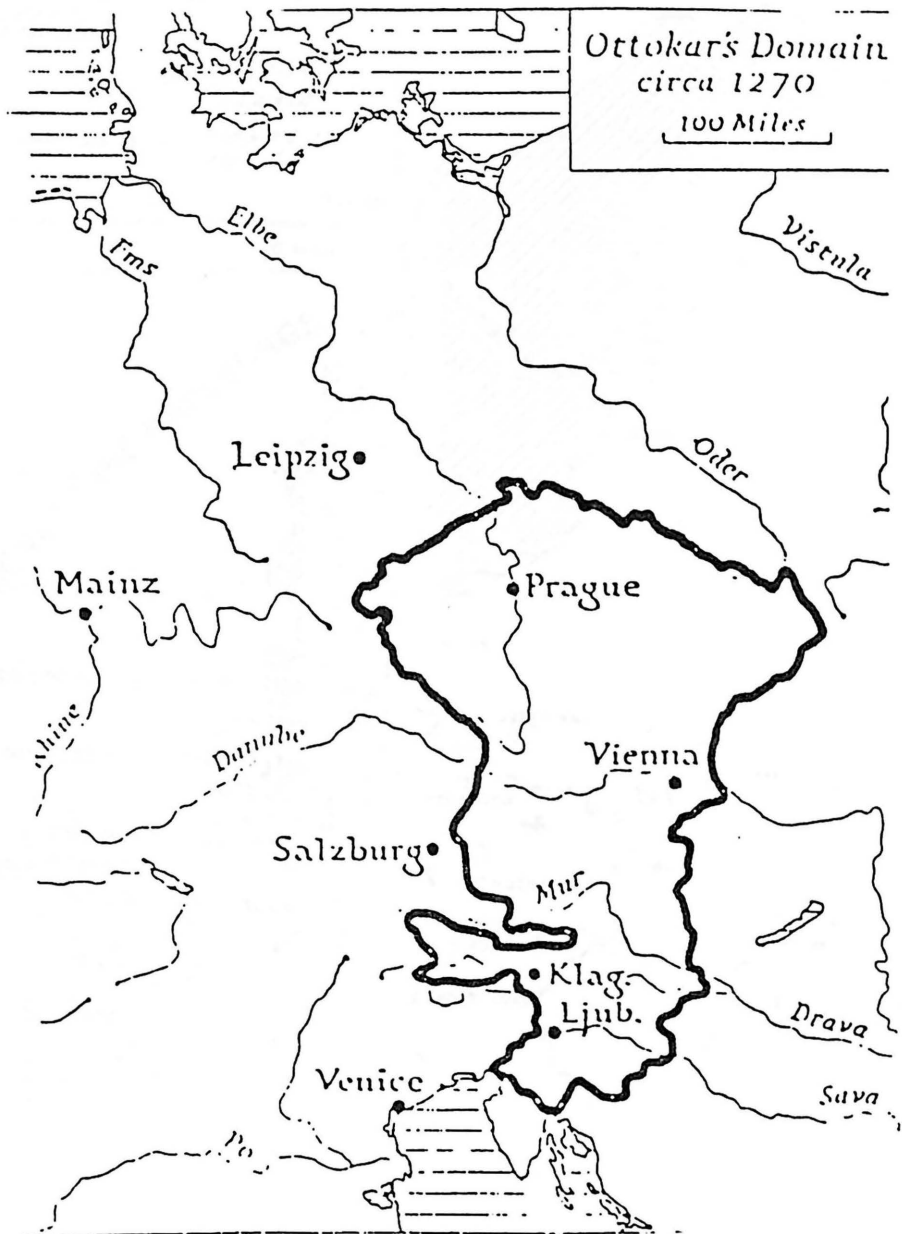
**Map 5**

## Territory of Samo

Source: Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia

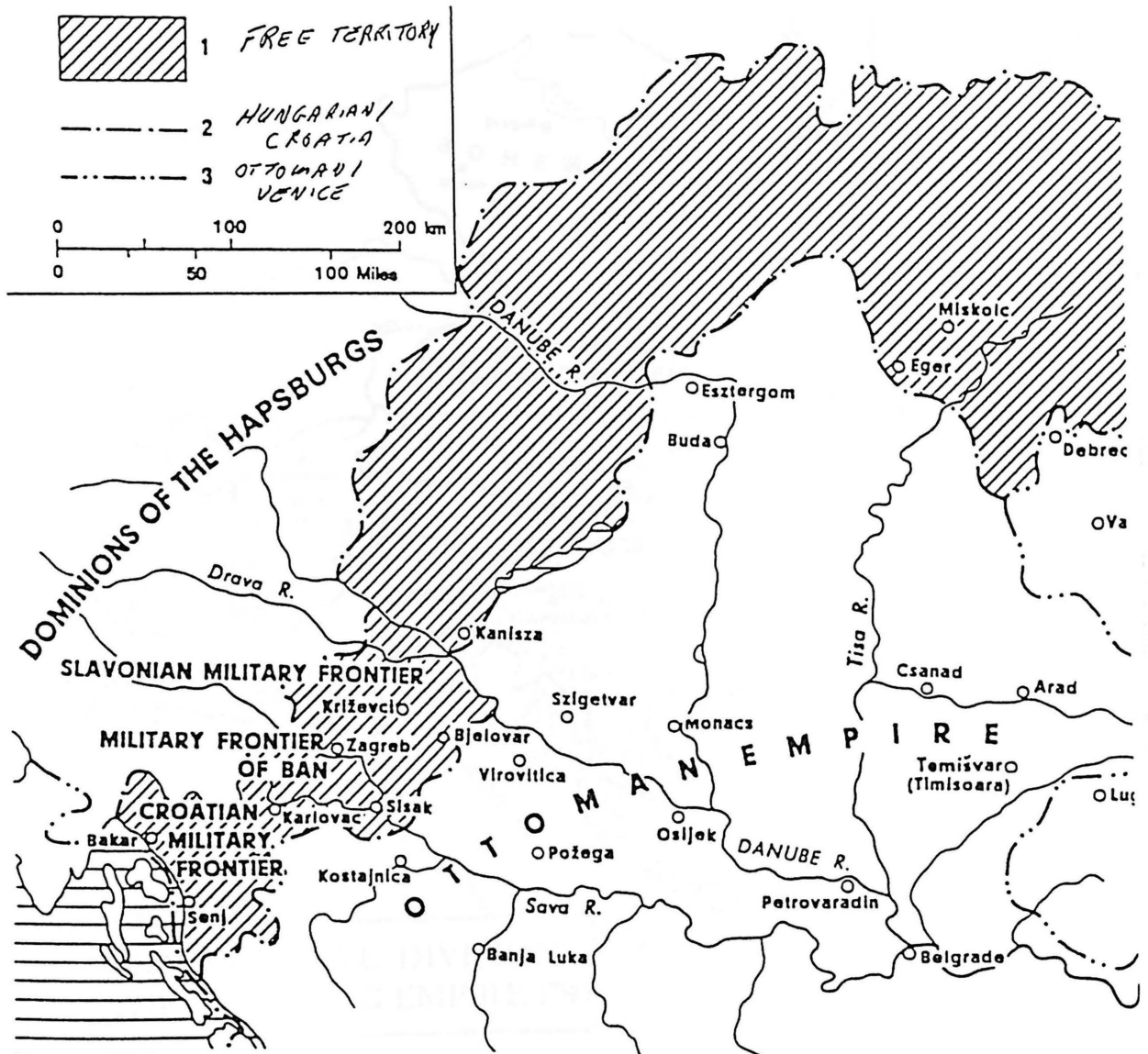
**Map 6**

## Territory of Ottokar

Source: Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia

## Map 7

## Military Frontier

Source: Clissold, A Short History of Yugoslavia

## Map 8

## Administrative Divisions of the Habsburg Empire 1780

Source: Macartney, "National States and National Minorities"

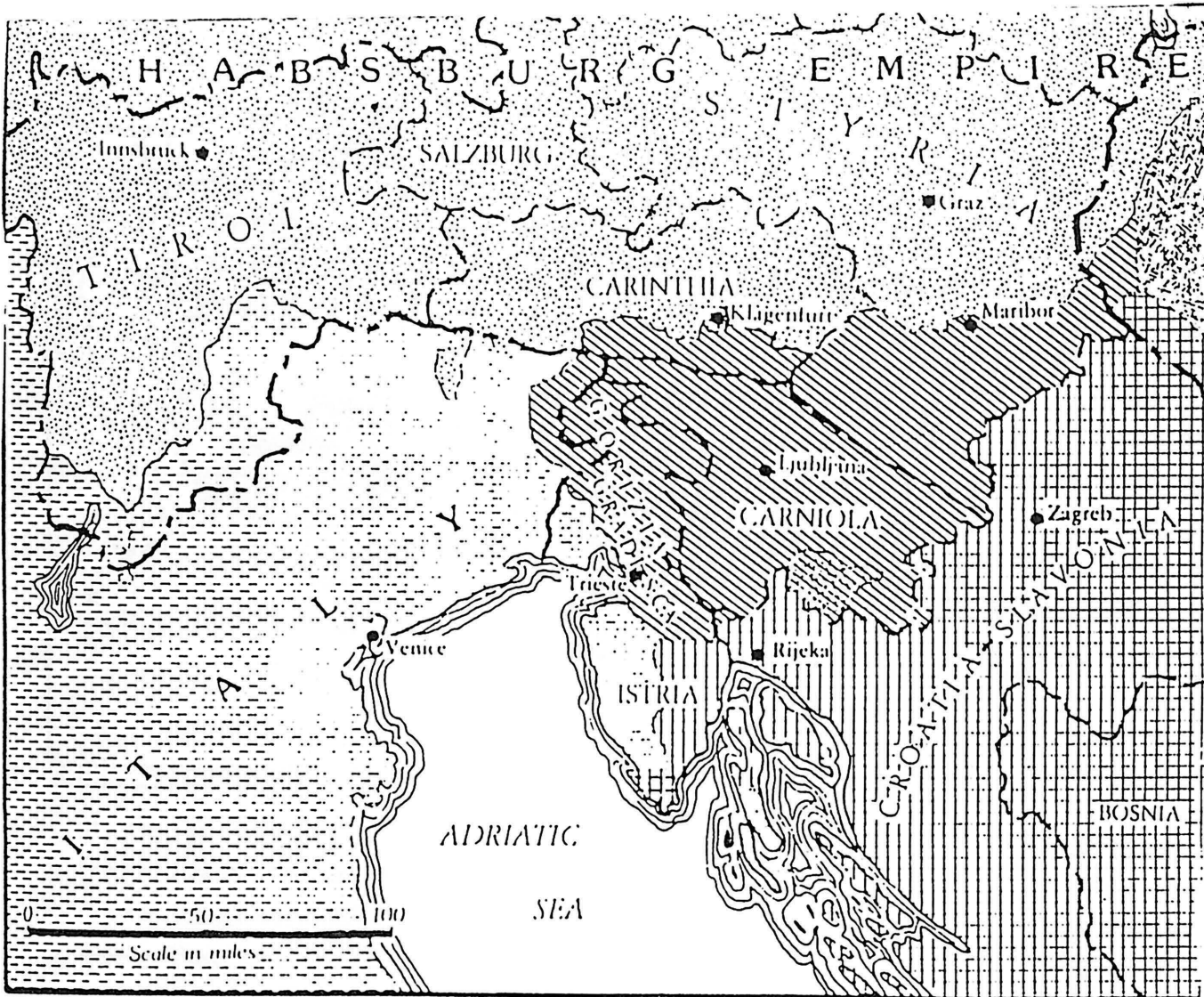




## Map 9

## Ethnic Distribution in Dual Monarchy

Source: Macartney, "National States and National Minorities"



Slovenes



Italians



Magyars



Germans

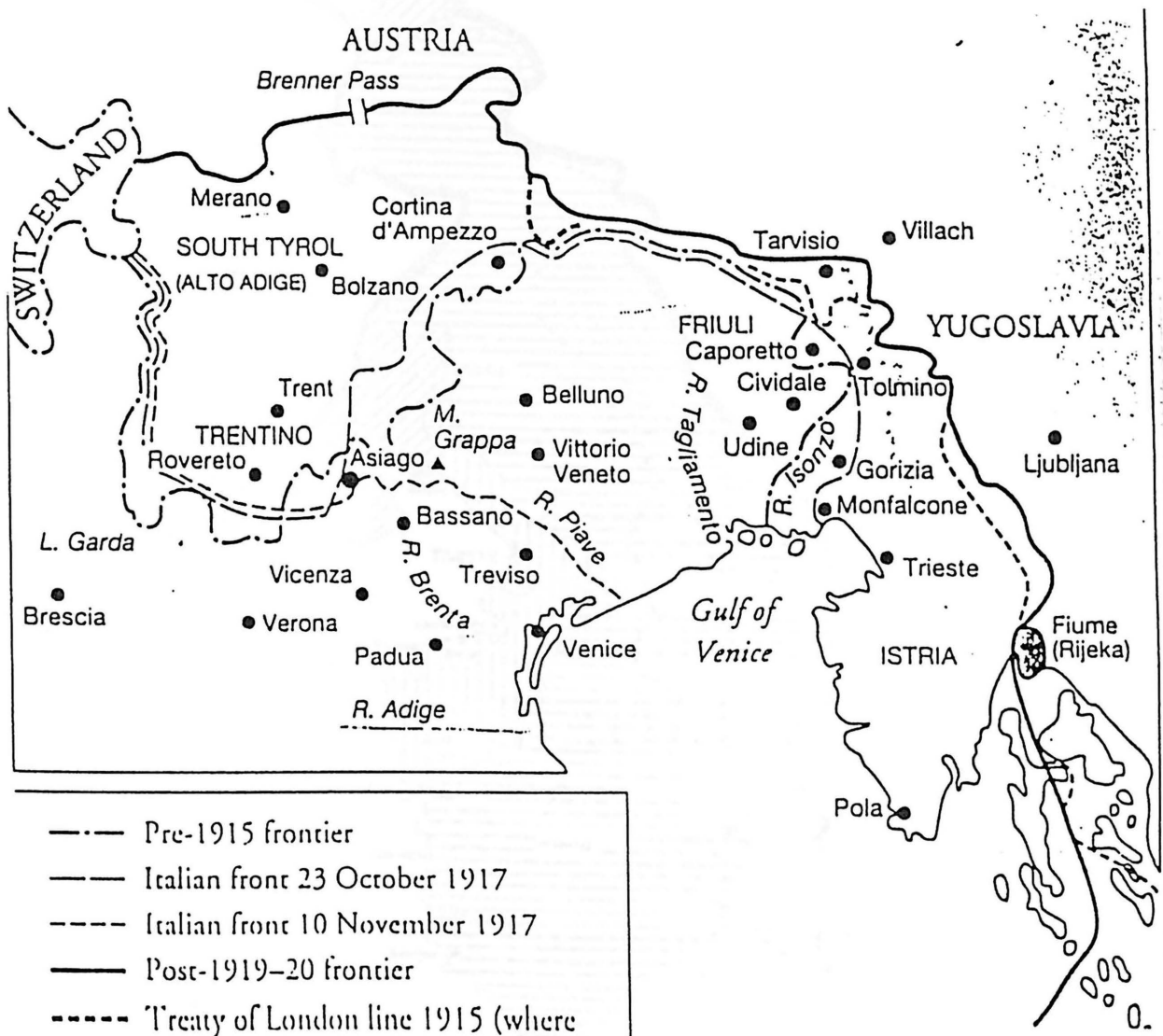


Croats and Serbs

# Map 10

Frontiers 1915-1919

Source: Clark, Modern Italy

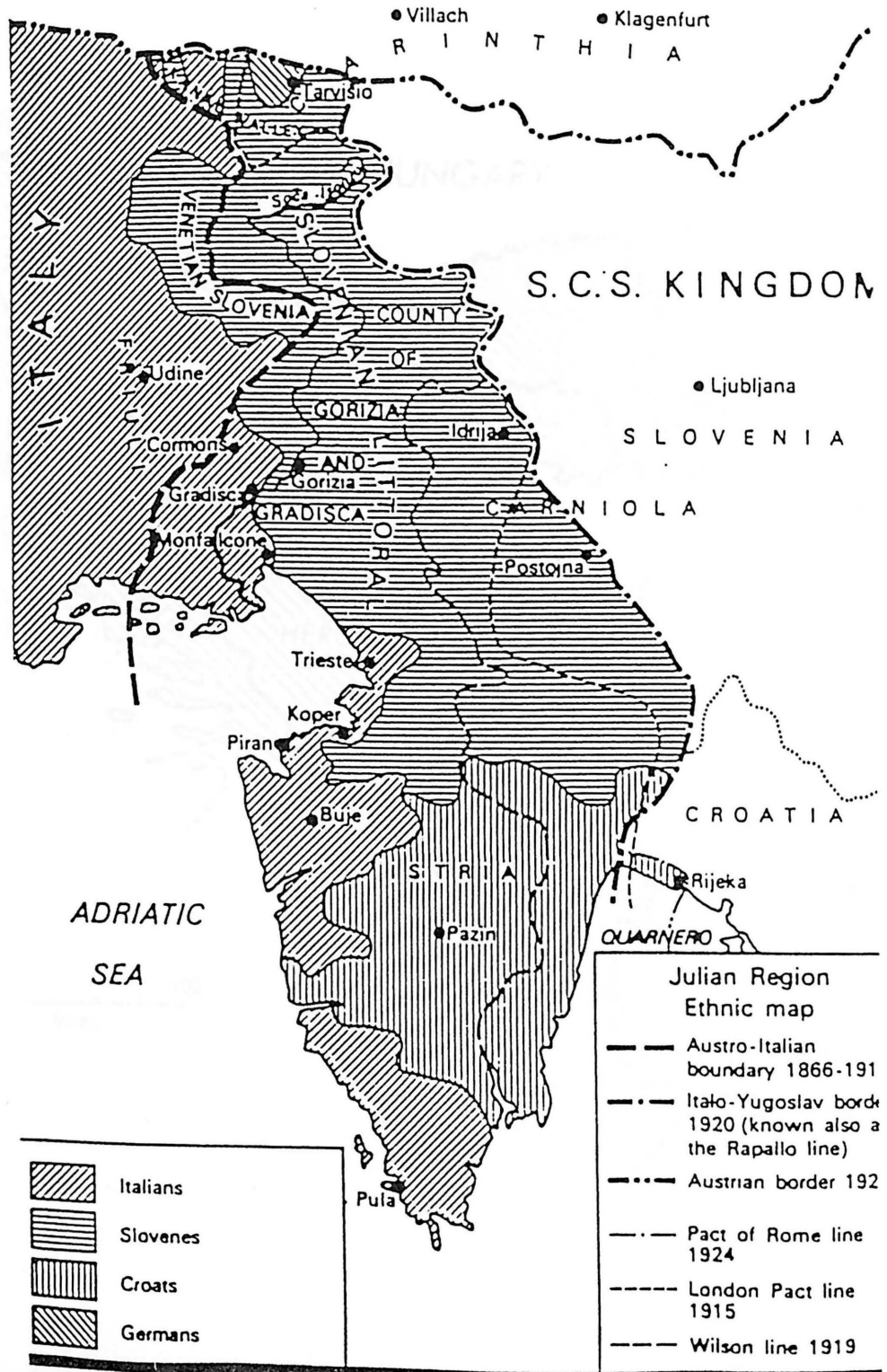




## Map 12

Venezia Giulia 1915-1920

Source: Jelavich, The Establishment of The South  
Balkan National States



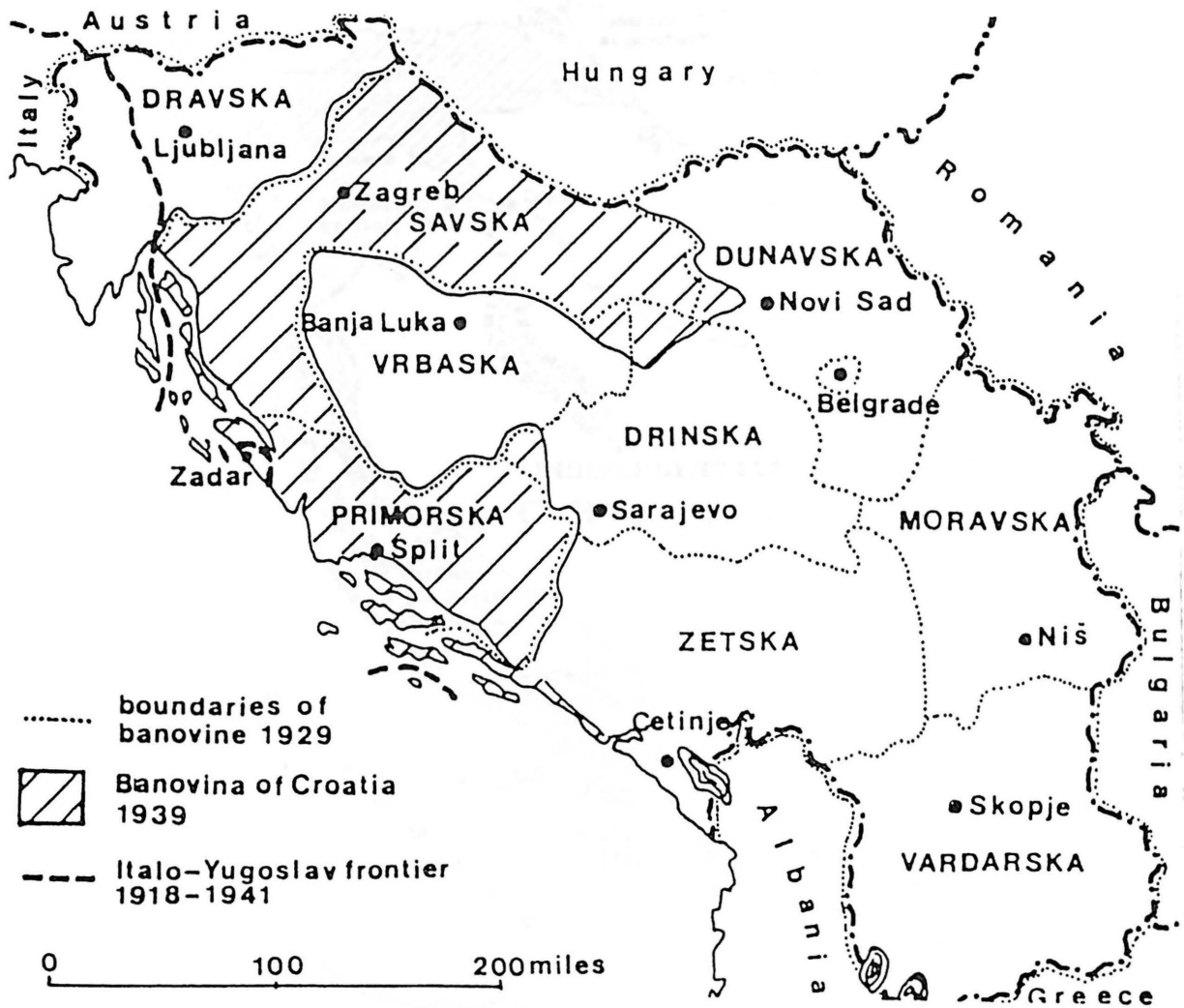
**Map 13****The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes**

Source: Jelavich, The Establishment of The South  
Balkan National States



## Map 14

## The Banovene of Yugoslavia

Source: Dedijer, History of Yugoslavia

## Map 15

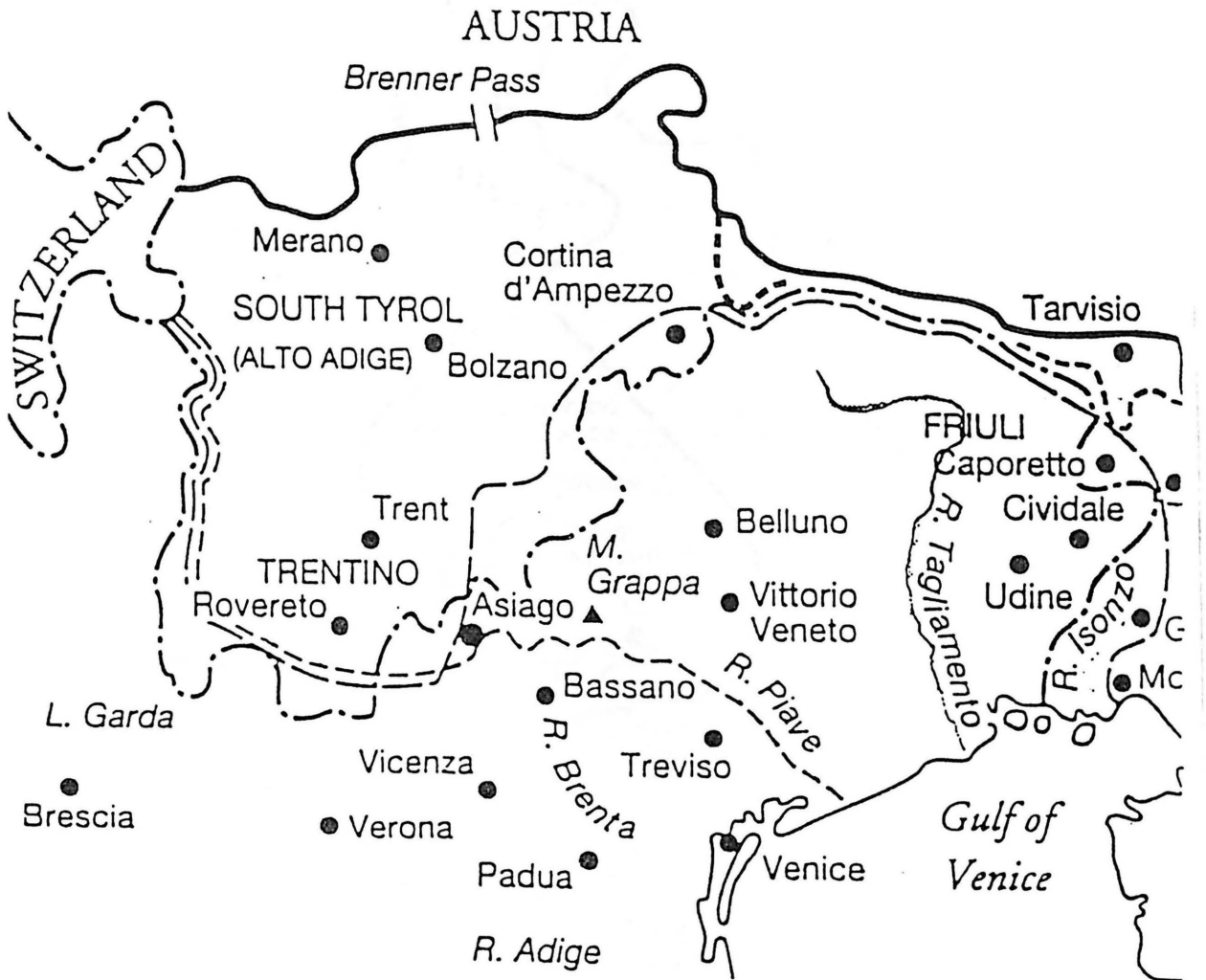
Agreed Partition of Yugoslavia, 1941

Source: Roberts, Tito, Mihailovic and the Allies



## Map 16

Friuli in 1945

Source: Clark, Modern Italy



# Map 17

## The "Morgan Line"

Source: Novak, Trieste



## Map 18

Julian Region, 1945-1947

Source: Novak, Trieste

Map 19

## Julian Region Boundary Proposals 1946

Source: Rabel, Between East and West

## Map 20

Free Territory of Trieste 1947-1954

Source: Novak, Trieste

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